

K. White (J.) B.D. 698. i 12
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THE
Dissenting Gentleman's
SECOND LETTER

To the REVEREND
Mr. *WHITE*,
In ANSWER to his
THREE LETTERS.

IN WHICH
His VARIOUS MISREPRESENTATIONS of the
DISSENTERS are corrected,
His OBJECTIONS against them answer'd,
And the GROUNDS of their DISSENT are further
represented, and proved solid and just.

To which is added a
P O S T S C R I P T,
CONTAINING
REMARKS on Mr. *WHITE*'s Defence
of his Three Letters, &c.

*In vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the
Commandments of Men, Mark vii. 7.*

L O N D O N:
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THE
SECOND PART

CHAPTER I

OF THE
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T H E
C O N T E N T S.

O <i>F Sponsors in Baptism</i>	—	Page 2
<i>Of Confirmation</i>	—	9
<i>Of the Absolution of the Sick</i>	—	14
<i>Misrepresentations of the Dissenters corrected</i>		18
<i>Of Standing and Kneeling at Prayer</i>	—	19
<i>Of Ceremonies practised and submitted to by Dissenters</i>	— — —	23
<i>Exceptions against the Burial-Office</i>	—	26
<i>Concerning the Kiss of Charity</i>	—	29
<i>Of Discipline</i>	— —	30
<i>Of the Lay Chancellor's Power</i>	—	32
<i>Of the Sacramental Test</i>	—	34
<i>Dissenters no Enemies to the Established Church, sincerely wish it well, and desire a Coalition with it</i>	— — —	39
<i>The Church has formerly shewn a persecuting Spirit</i>		43
<i>— also a dividing Spirit</i>	—	48
A 2		Of

(iv)

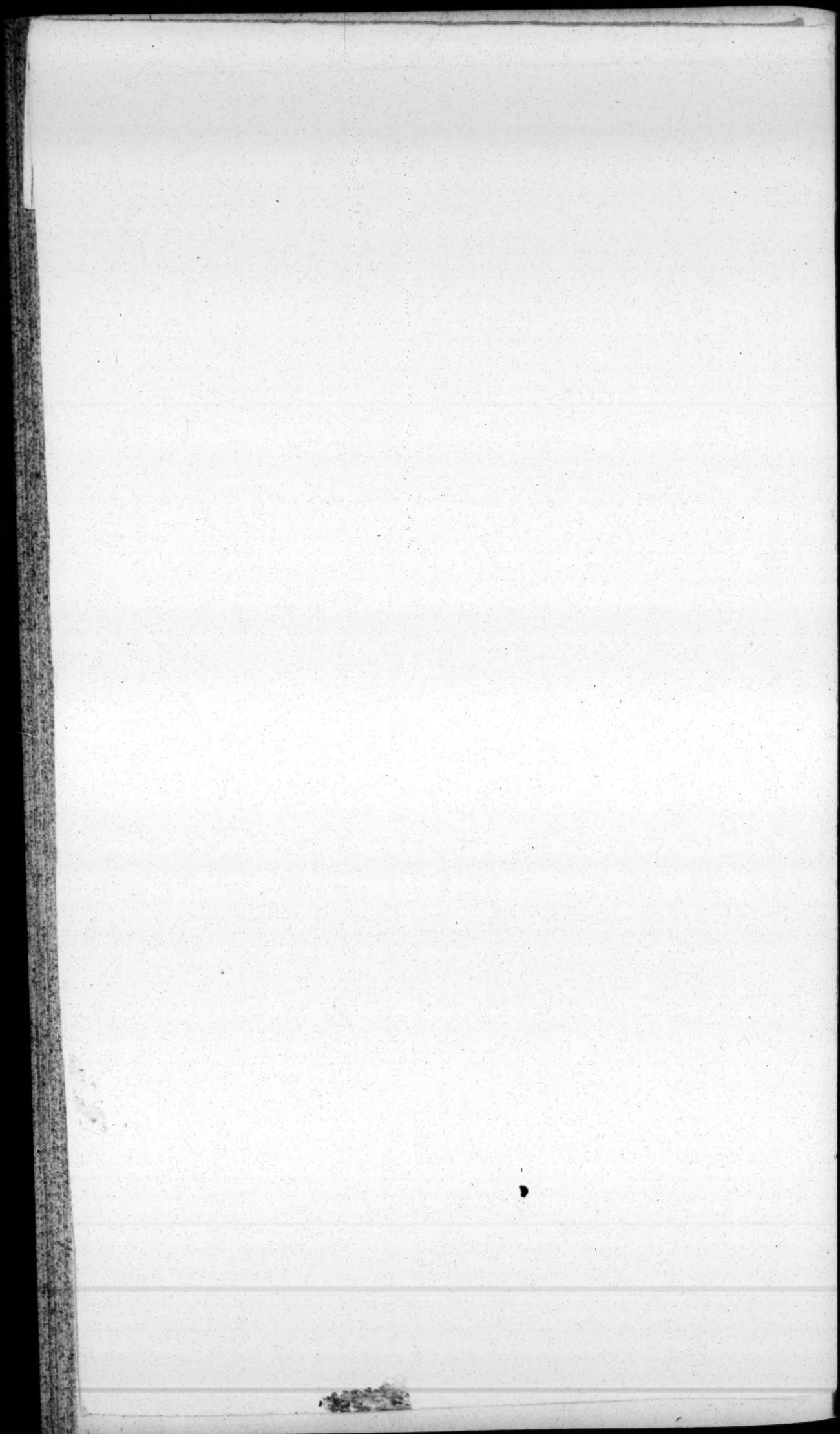
<i>Of Ordination, or Orders</i>	—	Page 52
<i>Of the People's Right to chuse their own Pastors</i>		55
<i>Of Reading the Apocrypha</i>	—	60
<i>Of Worshipping towards the East</i>	—	61
<i>Of Bowing at the Name of Jesus</i>	—	62
<i>Postscript</i>	— —	69



THE

E R R A T A.

- P**AG. 4. at Bottom, dele *Nichols's Defence, Part II.* and read *Letter I. p. 31, 32.*
- Pag. 8. Line 20. for *CHRIST's* read *CHRIST.*
- Pag. 10. Line 26. dele the Comma after *ONLY.*
- Pag. 29. Line 19. dele *you* and *as.*
- Pag. *ibid.* at Bottom, for *Lett. II. p. 2.* read *Lett. III. p. 2.*
- Pag. *ibid.* Line penult. to *Holy Spirit* add †, and at Bottom put † *Lett. III. pag. 3.*
- Pag. 46. Line 34. after *Ordination* add, *to be in any Part superstitious, erroneous, or contrary to the Scriptures.*
- Pag. *ibid.* Line 37. for *need Alteration,* read *need great Alteration.*
- Pag. 52. Line 8. for *Bercer* read *Beza.*
- Pag. 53. Line 9. for *Ministration* read *Ministrations.*
- Pag. 55. Line 24. for § 23. read ver. 23.
- Pag. 57. at Bottom, for *Lowth on Church Power,* read *Lett. II. p. 9.*
- Pag. 58. at Bottom, for *Lowth on Church Power,* read *Lett. II. p. 14.*
- Pag. 60. Line ult. for *receiving,* read *rescuing.*
- Pag. 73. Line 8. for *not limited,* read *not unlimited.*
- Ibid.* Line 9. after *limits,* read *it.*



T H E
DISSENTING GENTLEMAN'S
SECOND LETTER, &c.

S I R,

'T IS with some Regret I proceed in Vindication of my Dissent, as it will constrain me to say some things, which may seem to be disrespectful to *establish'd Forms* of Worship. But *Self-Defence* is a Principle which generous Minds allow strongly to operate. I highly reverence and esteem, and most heartily rejoice in the great Number of illustrious and excellent Persons, both *Clergy* and *Laity*, which the Church of *England* can boast. But yet, as the present *establish'd Forms* were drawn up when this Kingdom just emerg'd out of *Popish* Darkness; and as in Drawing them up, *especial Regard* was had to the *then* Weakness of the People, who could not be all at once entirely brought off from the old Ceremonies and Forms: As there are several Parts of our Liturgy, and ecclesiastical Constitution, which a great Number, I apprehend, if not all our *Bishops* and *Clergy*, wish to see alter'd: And finally, as the Alteration of those, and the Removing a few Things, acknowledg'd in themselves to be *mutable* and *indifferent*, would heal the *unhappy Breach*, and restore the chief Part of the Dissenters to the Church.—

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Upon

Upon all these Accounts, I may be allow'd, I hope, with Freedom to make *my Defence* against your vigorous Attacks; and to represent my Objections, and the Grounds of my *Dissent*, in as strong a Light as I am able.

The Part of a public *Monitor*, and of my *Instructor* in this Affair, which you have *voluntarily* taken on you, will allow me, as I go along, to put you in mind of a great Objection or two which Dissenters are wont to urge, but which you have quite overlook'd, and to intreat you will direct me How to get over them.

“ We Letter-Writers, say you, have a Privilege of setting down our Thoughts as they offer themselves, without scrupulously adhering to strict and close Method ^a. ” This Privilege you have indeed with great Freedom taken: I shall therefore be indulg'd the same.

To begin then with your Defence of SPONSORS in *Baptism*. It is the Opinion of the *Dissenters*, that when an *Infant* is brought to be enter'd by Baptism into the Family or Church of God, and a solemn *Vow* and *Engagement* is to be made before the Church for its *religious Education*; that *the* PARENTS, whose Child it is, and to whom both GOD, and *Nature* have committed its Education; that *those*, I say, are the *proper Persons* to stand forth, and take upon them this great and important Trust; and to bind themselves by a *solemn Vow* faithfully to discharge it. Now our Objections to the Order and Practice of *your Church* are,

I. That in a very arbitrary and strange Manner, without the least Shadow of Authority from *Reason* or *Scripture*, or the *ancient Practice* of the Church, you actually SET ASIDE the Parents in this Solemnity; and FORBID them to stand forth, and take upon them this great Charge to which GOD hath called them.

^a Lett. III. p. 60.

them. For your XXIXth Canon expressly commands, *That no Parent shall be urged to be present at his Child's Baptism, nor BE ADMITTED to answer as Godfather for HIS OWN Child.* And,

2. That you require *other Persons* to appear in the *Parents* Stead, and to take upon them this *important Trust*, and most solemnly to promise before God, and *the Church*, the Performance of that, which few of them ever do, or ever intended to perform; or, perhaps, are ever capable of performing. What now, Sir, is *your Answer* to these *Objections* of the Dissenters? Why, truly, the *first*, which is indeed the *chief*, you very prudently *slip over*; and attempt not the least Apology for *setting aside* the Parents; so that you leave us still to consider *this*, as a Thing utterly indefensible, unlawful, absurd, and which will admit of no Excuse.

But as to the *second, viz. the solemn Vow and Obligation* under which the *Sureties* lay themselves, to this you largely speak; and tell me — “ It is a
 “ gross Mistake to imagine, that the Promises
 “ there made by the *Sureties* concerning the future
 “ Faith and Practice of the Child, are made in
 “ their *own Name*: As if *they engaged* thereby,
 “ that, when it is grown up, it shall actually be-
 “ lieve all the Articles of the Christian Faith, shall
 “ renounce the Devil and all his Works, &c.
 “ Whereas the Church considers *these Answers*, as
 “ the CHILD'S *Answers*, only made by its *Repre-*
 “ *sentatives*: they contain ITS *Part* of the baptis-
 “ mal Covenant or Contract; which, because, by
 “ Reason of its tender Age, it cannot *itself* utter,
 “ is utter'd by *its Sureties* — ” But if this be,
 Sir, a *gross Mistake*, the most celebrated of *your own*
Writers have led us into it. “ *The Sureties in Bap-*
tism, says your learned Dr. *Nichols* ^c, *religiously*

B 2

“ ENGAGE

^b Lett. I. p. 31.
 Part II. p. 273.

^c Nichols's Defence, &c.

“ ENGAGE *for the Faith of the baptised ; that they*
 “ *SHALL sincerely believe all that is revealed in the*
 “ *Gospel, and SHALL direct the subsequent Actions*
 “ *of their Lives by the Laws of Christ.*” A Cloud
 of Witnesses, I believe, can be brought from the
Doctors of your Church, whose Judgment is the
 same. But no wonder the Learned differ in so my-
 sterious a Point.—You go on and affirm —“ That
 “ the *Sureties* are, by the Church, considered in
 “ this Affair, *no otherwise* than as *the Mouth* of the
 “ Child.—You see, Sir, here are NO *Promises* NOR
 “ *Engagements* which ANY besides *the CHILD* are
 “ supposed to enter into, and to be bound by.
 “ Read over the Office of public Baptism, you
 “ will not find, I assure you, ANY *Promises* or *Sti-*
 “ *pulations* at all made by *the Sureties* in their own
 “ Name: I mean any that are explicit^d.” But this
 Account of the Matter appears to me extremely
 dark ; and rather greatly to strengthen than remove
 our Objections. For,

FIRST, It represents *the Church* as acting a very
 extraordinary and unaccountable Part ; viz. as re-
 ceiving a *Child* to Baptism, on Account of ITS
 OWN *Faith*, and ITS OWN *Promise*, utter'd by *its*
Sureties ; when, at the same time, it knows, *the*
Child neither does nor can, either *promise* or *believe*
 any more than the Font at which 'tis baptized. It
 considers the Child as ACTUALLY *covenanting* and
contracting, yea, as the ONLY *covenanting* and *con-*
tracting Party in this Solemnity, when it knows it
 to be absolutely *incapable* of either. It represents
the Church as very solemnly asking THE CHILD—
Dost thou believe? Wilt thou be baptized? Dost thou
forsake the Devil? &c. When it is fully persuaded
 of its utter *Inability* to believe, or resolve, or will
 any Thing about it. Now when a *Deist* stands by,
 and sees a learned and grave Divine thus asking,
 and

^d Nichols's Defence, &c. Part II. p. 31, 32.

and talking, and covenanting with a *Child*, can you wonder, Sir, if he smiles, and merrily treats the whole Transaction as a Jest ?

“ *The Answers, you say, are considered by the Church as ONLY the Answers of THE CHILD, and contain ITS Part of the baptismal Covenant ; which because, by Reason of its tender Age, it cannot itself utter, is to be uttered by its Sureties :—*” That is to say, the Child *thinks*, but cannot *speak* : It really covenants, contracts, promises, but not being able by Reason of its tender Age to *utter* its good Intentions, these *Sureties* are its *Mouth* to utter them for it. But why, good Sir, its *Mouth* to speak for it ; and not its *Understanding* also to think for it ; its *Will* to promise for it ; and indeed its *Soul*, and its *very self*, to covenant and contract for it ? Is not *the Child*, by Reason of its tender Age, as absolutely incapable of *Covenanting*, as ’tis of *Uttering* ; of *Contracting*, as ’tis of *Speaking* ? If the *Surety* therefore does *one* of these good Offices for it, he undoubtedly does *the other* also. But,

SECONDLY. If there be, as you say, no *Promises* NOR *Engagements* which ANY *besides* THE CHILD *are supposed to enter into, or to be bound by*, the Consequence is extreamly plain, that then there are no Promises nor Engagements entered into *at all*, for its *religious Education*. For *the Child* surely, does not *engage* for its *own* religious Education. If the *Sureties* therefore do not enter into any Promise of this Kind, it evidently follows, that there are no express Engagements entered into *by any* for the Child’s Education. And thus, behold, your boasted *double Security*, turns out at last *no Security* at all ! But, a *Surety* not *bound* ! a *Sponsor* promising *nothing* ! a *Security* *unengaged* ! This is Language, Sir, in the *mercantile*, whatever it may be in the *scholastic* Way of Life, absolutely unintelligible. And to retort your own Instance ; my Lawyer I should

should think a very wrong-headed Man, who should pretend to lend my Money upon a *double Security*, and make a Merit of so doing, when at the same Time he confessed, there were no *Promises*, NOR *Engagements*, by which *either* of the Securities were *explicitly bound*.

To be plain, Sir; as for this Business of a Child's believing, promising, covenanting by *Representative* or *Proxy*, I cannot but think a Gentleman of your Penetration, will easily perceive it to be a Thing absolutely inexplicable, impossible, and absurd; a Thing utterly repugnant to Reason and common Sense, and without the least Shadow of Foundation in the *Christian* Religion. For if by the Constitution of the Gospel Covenant, a Child may *believe* by Proxy, *repent* by Proxy, *vow*, *promise*, and *contract* by Proxy, he may also, no doubt, *be saved* by Proxy, or *be damned* by Proxy. But, into what a Jest will this turn the Religion of *Christ*?

As for the *Antiquity* of this Practice, *Sponsors in Baptism*, you have the good Sense and Ingenuity not to pretend it was ever known, or so much as thought of, in the primitive *apostolic* Church. *Tertullian*, who lived about *Anno Dom.* 200, is the *first*, I apprehend, of all Christian Writers, that makes any mention of them. Nor does it at all follow from what *he* says, that these *Sponsors* were any other than the *Parents* of the Child. *Justin Martyr* who wrote fifty Years before him, when he particularly describes the Method and Form of *Christian Baptism* in his Days, says not a *single Word* of any such Persons.

But we learn from St. *Austin*, about the Year 390 (one of the earliest of Christian Writers, in which any mention of them is found) *when*, and upon *what* Occasion, these *Sponsors* were admitted.

“ A

• Vid. Lord King's Enquiry, Part II. p. 67, 68.

“ A great many, says he, are offered to Baptism,
 “ not by their Parents, but by others; as *Infant-*
 “ *Slaves* are sometimes offered by their Masters.
 “ And sometimes when the Parents are dead, the
 “ Infants are baptized, being offered by any, who
 “ can afford to shew this Compassion to them.
 “ And sometimes Infants whom their Parents have
 “ cruelly exposed, to be brought up by those who
 “ light on them, are now and then taken up by
 “ the holy Virgins, and offered to Baptism by
 “ them who have no children of their own, nor
 “ design to have any.” — These are ‘ *Austin’s*
 words. Observe now Dr. *Wall’s* § ingenuous Con-
 fession on them (and the good Doctor you know,
 Sir, was never partial in Favour of Dissenters, but
 a severe Remarker on them :) “ *Here we see the*
 “ ORDINARY Use then was for PARENTS to answer
 “ *for the Children: But yet that this was not counted*
 “ SO NECESSARY, as that a Child could not be bap-
 “ *tized without it.*”

Hence then it is plain, that *Parents* never were
set aside, when they were *capable* and *willing* to
 offer their children; and that only in Cases of *Pa-*
rents Incapacity, were *Sponsors* admitted: And in
 all *such Cases*, Dissenters also use them. Why now,
 I beseech you Sir, in Defiance of this acknowledged
 Usage and Practice of the *ancient Church*, as well
 as of *common Sense*, does *your Church* severely de-
 cree, “ *That NO PARENT shall be urged to be PRE-*
 “ *SENT at his Child’s Baptism, nor be ADMITTED*
 “ *to answer as Godfather for it?*” What! would
 the Parents standing forth *together with* the *Spon-*
sors, and promising *jointly* with them, at all *de-*
tract from this Solemnity, or render it *less effectual*,
 to secure the Child’s religious Education? It is
 most evident it would not, and that your Practice
 in this Point is undoubtedly an *Innovation*; an un-
 reasonable,

† Epist. ad Bonifac.

§ Hist. Inf. Bap. Vol. I. p. 196.

reasonable, absurd, and arbitrary *Deviation* from the Usage and Institution of the primitive *apostolic* Church; an *Absurdity* very generally acknowledged, and complained of, by the Members of *your Church*, though not attempted to be *reformed*.

“ But by *this Institution* of Godfathers and Godmothers, you say, your Church affords its Members some *great* and *special Advantages* towards growing in Grace and Goodness, *above* what are found amongst us:” and you tell me, “ you lay a great stress upon it, as a *wise*, an *useful*, and *necessary* Institution ^b.” — But did you not consider, Sir, that you were here *highly reflecting* upon the Wisdom and Goodness, not of the *holy Apostles* only, but of your *great Lawgiver* JESUS CHRIST? These SPECIAL ADVANTAGES for Growth in Goodness and Holiness, how came it to pass that the great *Founders* of the *Christian Church* never happened to think of them? You do not pretend it to be an *Institution* of JESUS CHRIST’s, and yet are not *afraid* to call it a *wise*, an *useful*, and even a NECESSARY *Institution*. Strange! that CHRIST, in whom were *hid all the Treasures of Wisdom*, and who loved the church so as to *lay down his Life for it*, should not *know* this *Institution* to be so *especially advantageous* to the growing Goodness of his Church; or that knowing it to be so, he should *unkindly* omit it; and that we are obliged to the *superior* Wisdom and Goodness of *after Ages* for supplying this Defect. It has usually been thought, that *the Apostles* declared the *WHOLE Counsel* of God; and *kept back* NOTHING *from the Church* which was *profitable* to it; and that *the Scriptures* are a *perfect Rule*; but this, it seems, is not true; you have discover’d it, Sir, to be *not true*: For here you shew us a *wise*, an *useful*, and a NECESSARY *Institution*, which they really *kept back*: and which

^b Lett. I. p. 58, 59.

which had it not been for the *Sagacity* of their Successors, *the Church* had been so unhappy as never to have known. Into what Mazes Men plunge themselves, when they deviate from the Truth!

Of the same *Temerity* you are guilty, Sir, when treating of *another Institution* of your Church, **CONFIRMATION**, and glorying over us in its Want.

“ Another Administration of our Church is *Confirmation*; this you know you have wholly discarded: and surely you will be obliged to acknowledge you have lost thereby a *very great Advantage*—
“ greatly conducive to future Holiness of Life!”

Yes, Sir, this we will freely own, when you also will acknowledge, that you are *wiser* than *the Apostles*; and can better judge what is *conducive to Holiness*, and for the *Advantage of the Church*, than its great Lawgiver JESUS CHRIST. Had this Ceremony of *Confirmation* been really of *great Advantage*, and *conducive to Holiness*, it is very strange that neither CHRIST, nor his *Apostles*, should have *ordained* it. That it is an *apostolic* Institution, you have not so much as *attempted* to prove: unless *Calvin's* Conjecture must be admitted as Proof.

The Text usually urg'd for it, (*Acts* viii. 14.) I presume you are fully sensible has *no Weight*. *Peter's* and *John's* going down to *Samaria* to pray, and lay their Hands on those whom *Philip* had baptised, is, surely, no Precedent, no Direction, no Institution nor Command for *our Bishops* to do likewise. For the End for which *the Apostles* did it, 'tis expressly said (ver. 15, 17.) was, *that they might receive the HOLY GHOST, i. e. its miraculous Gifts; and they pray'd for them, and laid their Hands on them, and they received the HOLY GHOST*. That it was his *miraculous Gifts* (such as prophesying, speaking with Tongues, &c.) to form them into a Church, cannot be disputed; because, they were something *visible*,
C and

and obvious to *Sense*; something which struck the Wonder and Ambition of the wicked *Sorcerer*; for 'tis said, *when SIMON saw that thro' Laying on of the Apostles Hands the HOLY GHOST was given, he offered them Money.*—Besides, as Dr. *Whitby* justly observes, if they laid not their Hands on *all* who were baptised, it makes nothing for *Confirmation*; if they did, then *Simon Magus* also was *confirmed*, and received the *Holy Ghost*: which you will by no means admit.

It was to give then to the newly baptised Converts at *Samaria* the miraculous Gifts of the *Holy Ghost*, that *Peter* and *John* went and laid their Hands on them. But do *our Bishops*, Sir, pretend that, by *their* Praying and Laying on of Hands, the HOLY GHOST is given? Do they not *disclaim* any Powers of this kind? Seeing then they make no Pretensions to the End, why with such Solemnity do we see them practising the Means? Might they not as well stretch themselves upon the dead Body of a Child, in Imitation of *Elisba*; or, make Ointment with Spittle for the Cure of the Blind, in Imitation of *our Saviour*; or, anoint the Sick with Oil, in Imitation of the *apostolic Elders*; as pray and lay their Hands on those who were baptised, in Imitation of *Peter* and *John*, who did this to the *Samaritan* Converts ONLY, that they might receive the miraculous Gifts and Powers of the *Holy Ghost*?

“ As for the open and solemn Renewal of the
 “ baptismal Covenant before God and many Wit-
 “ nesses, which, you say, baptised Persons ought to
 “ make, when they come to Years of Discretion :”
 this they make with us, in the *other Sacrament* of the Supper; which *Christ* himself has appointed, and which is the *only* Institution his Wisdom has thought fit to appoint, for this Purpose.

But if you will suffer me to *speak freely*, Sir, this Ceremony of *Confirmation*, as 'tis at present appointed and

and practised in your Church, to me appears so far from being *greatly conducive to Holiness of Life*, as that I wish it may not be conducive to a quite different, and a very noxious Effect : even to *cherish* in Mens Minds a *presumptuous* and *false Hope* ; and to *delude* them into *wrong Notions* as to the Safety of their State, and as to the *Terms* of Acceptance and Favour with God.

By the Order of your *Common Prayer*, “ ALL
 “ *Persons baptised, when they come to competent Years,*
 “ *and are able to say the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and*
 “ *Ten Commandments, and the Answers of the short*
 “ *Catechism, are to be brought to CONFIRMATION.*”
 The Bishop having asked, “ *Whether they renew the*
 “ *solemn Promise and Vow which was made in their*
 “ *Names in Baptism,*” &c. Upon their Answer *we*
do, proceeds hereupon to declare in the most solemn
 manner, even in an *Address* to God himself, *that He*
has vouchsafed to regenerate these his Servants by Water
and the HOLY GHOST (note: not by *Water* only,
 but also by the HOLY GHOST) *and to give them the*
Forgiveness of ALL THEIR SINS : and laying his
 Hand upon the Head of each particular Person, he
 CERTIFIES him by that Sign of God's Favour and
 gracious Goodness towards him.

I pray you, Sir, in the Name of God, inform me,
 what Warrant has *the Bishop* to pronounce a Man's
 Sins ALL forgiven, and himself regenerated by the
 HOLY GHOST, upon no other Grounds than his
 being able to say the short Catechism, and declaring
 that he stands by his baptismal Engagements ? Will
 you say that this is the *Christian Doctrine* concerning
 the Terms of Acceptance and Forgiveness with God ?
 Are good Vows and Resolutions, declared in the
 Church, infallible or proper Proofs of a Regenera-
 tion by the *Holy Ghost* ? Is a Man's *Professing* that
 he repents, and *Promising* that he will live godly,
 that *actual Repentance* and *Amendment* of Life which

alone can ensure the divine Pardon and Favour? Are there not Multitudes who *call* CHIRST *their* LORD, and publicly profess to stand by their baptismal Covenant, whom yet he will reject with Abhorrence at last? You will inform me then, Sir, how his *Lordship*, upon this meer Profession and Promise, *presumes* to declare to *Almighty* God, and to ASSURE the Person, that he is regenerated, forgiven, and without all Peradventure in a State of Favour with Heaven!

The Expressions, you must acknowledge, are couch'd in absolute and strong Terms: nor do I find that there is any Intimation, that their Forgiveness depends upon their Care to *keep*, and to *live up to*, their baptismal Engagements. No: but though their *whole Life* hath hitherto been scandalously corrupt; yet upon their being able to *say the Lord's Prayer, &c.* the Bishop solemnly pronounces a most *absolute Pardon* over them; appeals to *Almighty* God that he hath forgiven them *all* their Sins; and lest this should be too little to satisfy the *doubting* Sinner, and quash his upbraiding Conscience, He lays his Hand upon his Head, and CERTIFIES *him* by THAT SIGN of God's Favour and Goodness to him.

This Bishop, Sir, the Multitudes, who come to be confirm'd, are taught to consider as an *Ambassador* of CHRIST, a *Successor* of the Apostles, and a *special Minister* of God: when they hear then, this *sacred Person*, so solemnly declaring that they are fully justified, pardoned, and regenerated by the *Holy Ghost*, can you blame them if they *believe it*; and rest satisfied that their Souls are in a *safe and happy State*? And as full Remission of Sins, and the Favour of God, are to be had on such *easy Terms*; can you wonder, should you see thousands eagerly flocking from all Quarters to accept it? Or that Persons of very vile and profligate Characters should often thrust themselves in to partake of this Benefit;

Benefit ; and be seen receiving upon their Knees *episcopal* Absolution, and *solemn Assurances* of God's Favour and Grace ?

You know the Aptness of Mankind, Sir, to deceive themselves with *false Hopes* ; and to substitute good Purposes, Professions, and Vows in the Place of real Repentance and Amendment of Life : and you know this, Sir, (and have no doubt often declared it from your Pulpit) to be one of the chief Hindrances of Mens becoming truly good. Now should your Office for *Confirmation* be found thus powerfully and directly tending to *cherish* these false Hopes ; you must excuse me if I then should think it so far from *CONDUCTING to Holiness of Life*, as that in my Conscience I should believe it to be rather *greatly OBSTRUCTIVE to it* ; and extremely *delusive* and *injurious* to the Souls of Men.

Let me further ask you, Sir, on this Head—Is it any Breach of Charity, to suppose that amongst the *vast Crowds* which present themselves on such Occasions, there are often *many*, whom God, who knows their Hearts, knows to be Persons of a corrupt and wicked Mind, and to be still under the Power and Tyranny of Sin ? Can the *good Bishop* himself, in any Judgment of Charity, suppose there are not *some* such amongst the *thousands* he confirms ? Candidly tell me then, Sir, upon what grounds he *absolutely*, and *without Reserve*, declares to the ETERNAL GOD concerning them ALL, that he hath *fully forgiven these his Servants*, when God at that Time knows many of them *not* to be his Servants, and that he hath not at all forgiven them ? Or, lays his Hand on *each individual* Person to assure him of God's Favour, and of his *Regeneration by the HOLY GHOST* ; when, in Truth, some of those he thus assures are absolute and entire *Strangers* to the renewing Influences of God's Spirit, and fast bound in their Sins ? To me, Sir, I assure you, this appears, I do
not

not say a very shocking, but I must say a very unaccountable Solemnity ; and should be glad to know how to reconcile it to the *Reverence* you owe to GOD ; or to the Faithfulness and Charity due to the *Souls* of Men.

Near akin to *this*, but of a yet more obnoxious Nature, is another Office of your *Common Prayer*. The ABSOLUTION of the Sick. To *this* you know, Sir, *Dissenters* have always strongly objected, as too much resembling the *solemn Tricks* of the Church of Rome ; by which they pretend to send Men to Heaven, without real Amendment and Holiness of Life. But *this* you very prudently pass over in perfect Silence : for what indeed could so ingenious an Advocate offer, on so extremely absurd and indefensible a Point ?

Being come to the *sick Person*, (no Matter *what* or *how wicked* his former Life hath been) the Priest is directed, after some pious Exhortations, to examine, “ *Whether he believes the Articles of the Apostles Creed ; and truly repent him of his Sins ; and* “ *be in Charity with all the World : And to move* “ *him to make a special Confession of his Sins, if he* “ *feels his Conscience troubled with any weighty Matter.*” After which Confession, the Priest is order’d to ABSOLVE him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) *after this sort.*

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, *who hath left Power to his Church to ABSOLVE all Sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great Mercy forgive thee thine Offences : And by the AUTHORITY committed to me, I ABSOLVE thee from ALL THY SINS, in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. Amen.*

The Form is extremely solemn, Sir, and the Matter of the last Importance. You had need therefore be sure you go upon good Grounds, lest you be found to trifle with the *Name of GOD*, and
in

in Things of *everlasting* Moment, and to acquit those whom he abhors. Permit me, Sir, in this *great Name*, and before the World, to demand of you,

1. *What Church* is it, and *where* is the Church found, to whom CHRIST has left this high Authority and Power? Is it the Church of *England*, the Church of *Scotland*, the Church of *France*, or the Church of *Rome*? Do you here mean by *the Church*, what your XIXth Article hath defined it, *viz. The Congregation of the faithful*?—Or, do you understand *it* as in your XXth Article, where *it* is said to have *Power to decree Rites, and Authority in Matters of Faith*? If so, I have shewn in my former Letter, that *the Church* is no other than the *King* and *Parliament* of these Realms. The *King*, indeed, has Power to absolve all manner of Sinners, penitent or not penitent; and by a single *Act of Grace*, to vacate and set aside the Censures and Excommunications of all the *Bishops, Archbishops, and Clergy* of the Land, and to restore the Offender to the Church's Bosom again. To *absolve*, not in *Foro Civili* only, but in *Foro Ecclesiæ*; not in the *State* only, but also in the *Church*. But whether the *Kings* or *Queens* of *England* do this by Authority derived to them from CHRIST? Whether *that Church* of which THEY are declared the supreme Heads, be *the Church* to whom this high Power is given? And whether THEY, as *Heads* of it, have not *this Power* dwelling capitally, supremely, and principally in them; so as that, what THEY *loose on Earth*, is as certainly *loosed in Heaven*, as any Thing that is *loosed* by any inferior Members who officiate in the Church under them—These, Sir, are high Points, which without your Assistance, I shall not presume to settle. Be so good, Sir, as to let us know, WHAT CHURCH *upon Earth* it is, to whom CHRIST hath delegated this *important Au-*

THORITY;

THORITY; and WHERE the *Charter* or *Grant* is found, by which he gave it the Commission? But

2. That CHRIST hath given, can give, no such AUTHORITY to *fallible uninspired Men*, I should think absolutely out of doubt. Because if he hath given Power to any AUTHORITATIVELY to *absolve those who are truly penitent*, he must also have given them Power TO KNOW *who are truly penitent*. Else 'tis a Power to do nothing, for till they *know* them to be truly penitent (*i. e.* till they can *search their Hearts*) they cannot *authoritatively* absolve them: But if they cannot do it till *then*, they cannot do it *at all*. Besides,

3. If *the Priest* has really from CHRIST this Authority and Power, *the Manner* in which he is here ordered to apply it, is most certainly *wrong*. For upon the Sinner's *confessing* his Faults, and *professing* his Faith and sincere Repentance, the Priest is ordered most *solemnly* and *authoritatively* to absolve him. But are any Promises or Professions which a Sinner makes in that Distress, a *proper Ground* for such an absolute authoritative Absolution? Are not the most profligate, when *Death* is thought to approach, wont to feel their Conscience troubled with many *weighty Matters*, ready to confess their Sins, to express the deepest Remorse, and to vow Amendment if spared? But when the Danger is past, is there one of a Thousand that remembers his Vows, and that returns not to his Sins with as keen an Appetite as ever? Do not you Gentlemen of the *Clergy*, loudly complain of this, when you press to *present* Repentance, and warn us not to trust to the Sorrows of a sick Bed? But notwithstanding all this, when the *sick Sinner* sends for you, confesses his Sins, professes Repentance, and desires Absolution, you are directed and required with all possible Solemnity, even in *the Name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST*, *authoritatively*

to absolve him from ALL his Crimes, how many or great soever they have been, and to declare him fully forgiven. Strange! That you can presume in the Name of the *sacred Trinity*, to ASSURE a Man that he is *absolved* from all his Sins, when at the same Time you *know* yourselves NOT SURE that he is absolved! Yea, when the *only Grounds* of your doing it, are but the same *Signs of Repentance* which a thousand Sinners give, who are nevertheless held fast under the Power and Guilt of Sin! What would you call that Man, Sir, who in a Court of human Judicature, should *most solemnly* affirm, and declare in the *Name of God*, an *important Fact* to be done, which yet at the same Time he is *not sure* is done; or who should call Heaven to witness to *the certainty* of that, which he is not *at all* certain of? But is it less dangerous, or less reproachful, thus to trifle and collude in *eternal* Things than in *temporal*; in the Court of *Almighty God*, than in that of the *King*?

I cannot say, Sir, in what Light *you* view this Order of your Church, nor what Obedience *you* pay it, but am humbly of Opinion, that 'tis this *straining* the *sacerdotal* Character, which has sunk it into some Contempt; and that if it continues thus *strained*, lower, much lower, 'twill continue to sink. For when Men see you claiming from GOD, *awful* and *high* Powers, which they are sure GOD has never given you; and hear you with great Solemnity *authoritatively* absolving in the Name of the *Holy Trinity*, when at the same Time they know the *Holy Trinity* never gave you *any Authority* so to do, how natural is it for them to deride the *priestly Character* on which these Claims are founded, and to treat your other Offices with Ridicule and Disrespect?

And now, Sir, having presented you with some of the *true Grounds* of our dissent, many of which you have not at all, and the rest but slightly touch-

ed, in your *three* long Letters, I proceed to your Attempts to *reflect back* our own Pleas and Objections upon ourselves, and to prove us *self-condemned*.

Here you complain—"that you walk almost
" without Light—that our Churches are so secret
" in all their Ways, that there is scarce any know-
" ing what they are—that you must grope and feel
" for them as in the Dark—and that you are some-
" thing like one fighting with a Ghost^k." This
seems, indeed, a very just Description of your
Case, for you greatly misrepresent both our *Prin-
ciples* and our *Practice*. But the Blame of *this
Darkness*, Sir, be wholly to yourself. Are not our
Churches *open*? Our Prayers, our Sermons, our
Sacraments and Ordinations performed in View of
the World, that whoever pleases may come and see
our Manner in them?

But "we have no common Rules of Discipline
" and Worship, by which we hold ourselves
" obliged to walk; at least none made public and
" laid before the World, for your Examination
" and Discussion^l." Yes, Sir, we have an ex-
cellent COMMON RULE of *Discipline and Worship*,
by which all our Churches *hold themselves obliged to
walk*, even *the same* which CHRIST and *his Apostles*,
the great Founders of the *Christian Church*, origi-
nally drew up, published, and established for it;
and which they left as a *common Rule*, the ONLY
common Rule, and a PERFECT common Rule, for
the Use of all future Ages, viz. the HOLY SCRIP-
TURES: *This* therefore you may discuss with all
the Freedom you please.

But to descend to some of the many Instances in
which you much *misrepresent* us. Your very great
Mistake, as to our *imposing* SITTING at the *Lord's-
supper*, I have shewn in my former Letter. You
farther affirm—"That it is *generally* held amongst
" us, that the Sacrament is for none but *perfect*
" and

^k Lett. II. pag. 4.

^l Ibid.

“ and *consummate* Christians, such as can give a
 “ particular Account of their Conversion^m.” Here
 you *walk*, Sir, *without Light*. There is not a *single*
Church, I am persuaded, amongst the *Dissenters* in
 the whole Kingdom, hardly a *single Person*, who
 hath *this Notion* of the Sacrament. We *universally*
 hold, that *every* sincere Christian has a Right to the
Lord's-Table.

“ As to the Duty of *Fasting*, you say, if you
 “ are not *mightily deceived*, it is thrown away
 “ amongst us. You have not met with any Ser-
 “ mons or Treatises of our Ministers, shewing the
 “ Obligations, and pressing its Practice upon the
 “ People; nor have you ever heard of its being
 “ practised, even by the strictest and devoutest
 “ amongst us.” You are *mightily deceived*, Sir,
 a great deal *too mightily*, for one who sets up for so
 severe a *Censor* of his Brethren. Amongst many
 others, I refer you only to a most excellent Discourse
 on *Fasting*, in *Bennet's Christian Oratory*, Vol. II.
 which I am sure you cannot read without admiring
 it, blushing, and condemning your own Temerity.

You are pleased to give us also a very *grave* and
severe Reprehension for *Standing*, and not *Kneeling*
 at our public Prayers; and say, “ It is little less
 “ than *imposed* upon our People, insomuch that
 “ should any one *presume* to kneel in our Churches,
 “ we should *certainly* censure and condemn him for
 “ it.”—That *your Church* has as good Right to
 “ impose *Kneeling* in the public Worship upon her
 “ Members, as *Dissenters* have to *impose* it upon
 “ their Children and Servants in their *Family De-*
 “ votions^p—And that we *ALWAYS* practise it in
 “ *private*^q.” You are extremely unhappy, Sir,
 in your Intelligence about this *strange* People, whom
 you have taken upon you to *reprehend*. How came
 you to know, what their Posture of Worship *al-*

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ways

^m Lett. I. pag. 52. ⁿ Lett. I. pag. 65, 66. ^o Lett. II,
 pag. 65, 67. ^p Lett. I. pag. 28. ^q Lett. II. pag. 68.

Ways is in PRIVATE? Have they taken you into their *Closets*? For my own Part, I pretend not to have been much with them at their secret Devotions, and therefore will not pronounce with such Assurance as you do upon the Point; but am very strongly persuaded they practise variously in this Matter, and do not always kneel.

As to their *Families* and *Churches*, though I have been present at *Prayers* in a great Number of both, (which you, I presume, Sir, never have been) I assure you, I never once saw nor heard any Thing like the *Impositions* you mention. In their *Family* Devotions some stand, and some kneel, according as their Inclination and Convenience serves. And in their *public Assemblies*, many kneel at Prayer, I believe, the whole Kingdom over, without it ever entering into the Thoughts of their *Fellow-Worshippers*, to take the least Offence thereat.

You tell me “ you can name a considerable “ Congregation amongst us, which is greatly scandalized—and has taken a great and general Offence, at one of its Members kneeling at public Prayer.” But as in many other Points, Sir, ’tis very notorious you have been ill served by your *Informers*, as to our Customs and Worship; you must give me Leave to think, that they have here also made too free with your Credulity. That we have weak Brethren amongst us, and those not a few, I am very ready to own. But a Congregation, a considerable Congregation too, so weak as to take a great and general Offence at such a Trifle as this! You must excuse me, if I cannot easily admit it. I think you will do Justice, Sir, to name the Congregation, that it may either purge itself of the Reproach, or stand corrected before the World, for its unchristian and imposing Temper; and learn to act more consistent with that Liberty and Right of private Judgment, which as Dissenters they profess.

No,

No, Sir, *Dissenters* are not for *binding*, where GOD has *left free*. They are our *Brethren* of another Church, who think themselves capable of *mending* CHRIST'S *Institutions*; and not content to use them in the *plainness* and *simplicity* in which DIVINE WISDOM left them, must needs *embellish* and *improve* them by *Additions* of their own.

These *Additions* of your own, for Instance, KNEELING at public Prayers, you are so surprizingly *sanguine* as to represent as “ a great *Improvement* of “ public Worship, and as adding a *natural Splendor* and *Beauty* to it—that our Worship is *debased* “ for Want of it—that *kneeling* is a *more* humble and “ honourable Posture—*much more* expressive of our “ profound Reverence of GOD.—And the humble “ Posture of *kneeling*, NATURE itself so plainly “ dictates, and so powerfully prompts us to, that “ a Man, if he were left to himself, whenever— “ he makes his Requests known to GOD, will “ hardly do it in any other—unless when some *affected Restraint* is laid upon him *.” How towering a Flight! You do not pretend to say, that either CHRIST or *his Apostles*, ever enjoined, or constantly, or mostly, *used* KNEELING at public Prayer; you mention several Instances from *Scripture*, where STANDING was the Posture of some of the *most solemn* Addresses to Almighty GOD—*Abraham* STOOD *before the Lord*†, when he offered up that humble Intercession for *Sodom*. Of the *Levites* and *all the Priests*, 'tis particularly recorded, that they STOOD UP; and all the People are also called upon to STAND UP, and *blest the Lord their GOD*, in that solemn Address to Heaven, *Nebem. ix. 2, 3, 4, 5*. An Address of deep Humiliation, Confession, Deprecation, and Covenanting with GOD, one of the *most solemn* that stands upon sacred Record; 'tis here no less than *four* several Times expressly mentioned, that STANDING was *the Posture* in

* Lett. II pag. 66, 67, 69, 73.

† Gen. xviii. 22.

in which their Worship was offered up. *Moses* and *Samuel* are represented as **STANDING** before **GOD**, when making their most humble and importunate Intercessions with him, *Jer.* xv. 1. When our SAVIOUR in his Parable represents *two Men praying in the Temple*, **STANDING** is the Posture in which he describes them, *Luke* xviii. 10, 11. Yea, himself in express Words has, if not actually in-joined, yet most fully declared his *Approbation* of this Gesture, *Mark* xi. 25. *When ye STAND praying, forgive.* Finally, when the *primitive Christians*, it is acknowledged on all Hands, *every Lord's Day*, and at all other Times betwixt *Easter* and *Whitsuntide*, universally *prayed* **STANDING**, and **NEVER** *kneeled* at their public Devotions. (Consequently, by the Way, not at the *Lord's-supper*.) “*Die Dominico nefas ducimus, &c.* says *Tertullian*”: “*On the LORD'S-DAY we account it A SIN to wor-*”
 “*ship KNEELING; which Custom we also observe*”
 “*from Easter to Whitsuntide.*”——With all this Evidence glaring full in your Face, Sir, you have the *Assurance*, shall I call it, or does it deserve some *other* Name, very smartly to reprehend us for **STANDING** at our public Prayers; and to call it a *Debasement of our Worship*—to affirm that *kneeling is a MORE humble and honourable Posture—*
 MUCH MORE *expressive of our profound Reverence of*
GOD—A great IMPROVEMENT of public Worship,
 and that it adds a natural **BEAUTY** and **SPLENDOR**
 to it—Surprizingly enthusiastic! What *Abraham*,
 and *Moses*, and *Samuel*, and *Nehemiah*, and all the
Priests, and *Jewish People*, **DEBASE** the divine
 Worship, when they **STOOD** before **GOD**, and made
 their solemn Addresses to him! Yea, what **CHRIST**
 himself too *debase* it, by directing Men to **STAND**
praying!

Had you happened, Sir, to have been of the
 Council of the *Apostles*, you could have helped
 them

them to establish *Christian Worship* upon a greatly improved, a more beautiful and perfect Plan; and have INJOIN'D this MORE humble and honourable Posture, this ADDITIONAL Splendor and Beauty to public Prayer, which it never came into *their* Minds to INJOIN the Disciples.—But as our Bibles at present stand; and God and *Jesus Christ* have left us at full Liberty to offer up our Prayers either *Standing* or *Kneeling*, you will excuse us if we are not so struck with your *additional Beauty* as to give ourselves up blindfold to its Charms.

But it seems we are *inconsistent*, in condemning *some* of your Ceremonies, when at the same Time we readily conform ourselves to *others*: yea, have *many Ceremonies* allow'd and practised amongst ourselves. “Such, you aver, we have, tho' we seem not to know it; Such as Uncovering our Head when we enter either your Churches, or our own Meetings.” But you are still “*walking in the Dark*,” Sir, as you justly represent yourself, “and *encountring with Ghosts*.” The *Dissenters* have no such Custom of *Uncovering their Heads* when they enter into their *Meeting-Places*, unless in Time of Worship; no Notion of paying Reverence to *Timber and Walls*; no Ministers amongst them who have *Sense* or *Grace* enough to *consecrate* a Piece of Ground: And when they use this Ceremony at *Entring your Churches*, 'tis, I assure you, purely as a *civil*, not at all as a *religious* Ceremony; a *Compliment* paid, not in the least to the *Building*, but entirely to our *good Brethren*, whom we would not needlessly offend.

“*Kneeling at Ordination*,” the next Ceremony you mention, tho' generally used amongst us, was never I believe *imposed*. If the Person to be ordained scrupled *that Posture*, he would, without all Doubt, be permitted to *stand*.

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As for “ the *secret Ceremonies* which you *suspect*, “ but will not positively affirm, to pass at striking “ the Covenant betwixt us and our Pastors,” which you once and again mention, let your *Suspensions* on that Head, Sir, give you no further Pain. I assure you I neither know, nor have ever heard of any such *Covenanting* now practised amongst us: And am persuaded, that of all our Churches, not one in five hundred observe any such Thing.

“ In Balance against your *Surplice* you put, what “ you call, the Ceremony of our *long sweeping* “ *Cloak* *.” But the least Attention would have shewn the *two Cases* to be far from *parallel*. Our Ministers are at full Liberty either to *use* or *disuse* the *one*: Are yours *so* as to the *other*? Did you ever hear of any learned pious *Pastors* amongst us silenced, rejected, and cruelly imprisoned for refusing the *sweeping Cloak*? But, have you never heard of your *Hoopers, Sampsons, Humpherys*, and an hundred other Ministers, Men of distinguish’d Learning and Usefulness in *your Church*, who have been *swept* from their Stations in it; silenced, confined, and grievously harassed, *only* for scrupling your *Surplice* and *Cap*? Have you never heard of *many Churches* forsaken, and shut up in *London*, and of numerous Congregations, both in City and Country, deprived for a long while of Sacraments and public Worship, by the rigorous Imposition of *your Habits* on their *Ministers*? And if the most celebrated Divine was now to offer to officiate in any of your Churches, but refused to *wear a Surplice*, must he not, by your *Canons*, be set aside and refused? Had *our Cloak* been the Occasion of a thousandth Part of the Distractions and Confusions in the Church, as *your Surplice* has been, and *swept* so many worthy Persons from their Ministry and Livings in it; we should have had the Grace, I hope, soon to treat it as a *Besom of Destruction*, and to have doom’d it to the Flames.

But

* Lett. III. p. 42.

But “ the Giving the *Christian Name* in Baptism “ to the Person baptised, you very seriously urge “ as another solid Argument of *Ceremonies* amongst “ us,” and ask, “ Is it not an *Addition* to the Sacrament? Is it not an *Imposition*?” You add, “ Now I see you smile.” Excuse me, Sir, I could not help it! your Argument is quite *new*, and really surpris’d me with its Solidity and Weight. Yes, Sir, I own it an *Addition*, an *Imposition*, and a very *ridiculous* one too. And should any Minister of ours pretend to *add*, or to *impose*, this Ceremony upon his People; and forbid them to call the Child by *its Name* till it was baptised; you may be assured he would soon meet with the Disregard and Contempt his Impertinence deserv’d. When you baptise *adult* Persons, do you *give* their Names in that Ceremony? Or do you not *only* call them by Names *before* given? The same, I apprehend, is the Case as to *Children* amongst us.

As for the *Ceremonies in Marriage*; these, you justly observe, we consider only as *civil* Ceremonies, and the Priest as a *civil Officer*, appointed by the Magistrate to officiate in this Affair. And whatever *decent Rites* the Magistrate prescribes in Matters of a *civil* Nature, we think it our Duty reverently to observe. But, “ the Magistrate prescribe!” you with Astonishment reply. “ For God’s Sake how “ does the Magistrate here prescribe the Rites and “ Ceremonies of *Marriage*, more than the *other* “ Rites and Ceremonies of the Church?” But could not a Gentlemen of your Discernment perceive a Difference here? Is the Form of *Marriage* any where *instituted* by our SAVIOUR; or a Part of *Christian Worship*; as Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are? May we not therefore *own* the Power of the *civil Magistrate* to appoint *Rites* and *Forms* for the Celebration of the *one*, but not so as to the *other*? By prescribing Rites of *Marriage*, the Magistrate

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^y Lett. III. p. 10.

^z Lett. III. p. 6.

acts in Character, and rules in *his own Kingdom*: but by *authoritatively* prescribing Rites in *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*, we humbly apprehend, he extends beyond the Sphere assign'd him by GOD, and attempts to rule in *CHRIST's Kingdom*: and that therefore here we are *to obey GOD, rather than Man*.

You further ask with surprize—"What *civil Ceremonies* in the Church of GOD! in the midst of the Administration of a divine Institution: intermix'd with pastoral Exhortations, holy Prayers, solemn Benedictions ^a."—But why, Sir, so astonish'd? Did you never *take an OATH* in a civil Court of Judicature? And did not the Person who administred this *SACRED Rite*, give you a *pastoral Exhortation*, accompanied with an *holy Prayer*, and a *solemn Benediction*, piously invoking on you GOD's Blessing and Help? And as to *the PLACE*, which you call the *Church of GOD*, where *Marriage* is solemnized; you might have pleased to remember, that the *Consecration* of Timber, and the *Sanctity* of Walls, is a Point too sublime for *Dissenters* Understandings; and that in their Opinion all Places are alike holy, and that no Building on Earth merits the high Honour of being called the *Church of GOD*.

The same Reply we make as to the *Ceremonies of Burial*, our Compliance with which you also briskly *retort* upon us. Is *Burial of the Dead*, Sir, a *CHRISTIAN Institution*? Any Part of the Religion or Worship of *Christ*? Is it not purely a *political* or *civil* Thing? Yes; and as such *only* we view it: and consider the Person who officiates, as one *appointed* to this Office, *directed*, *instructed*, and *maintained* by the STATE.

But as you are here professedly "*answering our great and popular Objections*," how came you, Sir, to slide over, in consummate Silence, one of the *greatest* and *most popular*, to this *Office of Burial*? which, indeed, is not *ours* only, but an Objection
of

^a Lett. III. p. 6.

of some of the most illustrious Members of your own Church. Were you conscious the *objected Passages* were incapable of Defence, and therefore prudently let them drop?

There are but *three Cases*, you know, Sir, in which your Church *refuses* this solemn Office of *Burial*, viz. to those who die unbaptised, to Self-Murderers, and to those who are under Sentence of the greater Excommunication. As for *all other Persons* which are brought to the Church-yard, it very strictly *commands* you, even under pain of *Suspension*, by *Canon 68*, that you use over them the Form prescribed by the *Common Prayer*. Now, hence it comes to pass, that over some of the most *abandon'd* and *profligate* of Mankind; over Men who have been cut down in a Course of open Impiety by a sudden and untimely Death; or who even fell by the Hand of *Justice* for some black and atrocious Crime; over *these*, I say, your Church, and I say it with Astonishment, directs and commands you most solemnly to declare, *That almighty GOD of his GREAT MERCY has taken to himself the Soul of this your dear Brother. You give GOD hearty Thanks that it hath pleased him to deliver him out of the Miseries of this sinful World: And you pray GOD, that when you yourselves shall depart out of this Life, you may REST IN CHRIST, as your HOPE is this your Brother doth.* This is what your Church *commands* you solemnly to say over EVERY Person brought to be buried, the *three Cases* above excepted. So that if the Man happen'd to be *killed* in the very Act of committing *Murder, Adultery, or a Rape*: Or for either of these Crimes dies upon the *Gallows* an impenitent hardened Wretch, whom *Vengeance* suffer'd not to live; yet concerning him you are to declare, that *Almighty GOD hath in GREAT MERCY taken him to himself: Tho' he died a Victim to public Justice, and was taken away in Wrath. You are to give GOD hearty Thanks, that he hath taken this your BROTHER out of the Miseries of this*

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sinful

Sinful World: Tho' you have the strongest Reason to believe, that he is gone down to Realms of greater Misery below. And you are to profess before GOD *that you HOPE the Man RESTS IN CHRIST*, and pray that you yourselves may rest in Christ in the same manner as this your Brother doth: when you have all the Grounds in the World to think he *died in his Sins*, and is therefore not gone to be *with CHRIST*, where nothing that is defiled can ever be admitted. Strange! and extremely shocking! what can the People think, Sir! what must *Infidels* and *Deists* think! when they hear you in the Morning denouncing from the *Scriptures* certain Death and Destruction from the *Presence of God*, to all vicious and corrupt Persons; and assuring them that *without Holiness NO MAN shall see the Lord*: But in the Evening from the *Common Prayer*, shall hear YOU, the SAME PERSON, declaring *before God* your *HOPE of the eternal Happiness* of one of the most debauch'd and profligate Men your Parish affords; and sending him hence with all the lofty Expressions of Confidence and Hope, as you would a Person of the most shining and exemplary Life.

Do you imagine, Sir, People do not think? Can you wonder *DEISM prevails*? That the *Priesthood* is ridiculed? And that your *good Sermons* are no more effectual to reform a corrupt World? To me this appears (and doubtless it does the same to thousands of your own Church) a most indecent Prostitution of your *sacred Character and Office*; a Trifling and Prevarication in Things of everlasting Moment; and a fatal Snare to the Souls of Men: Who seeing their debauch'd Neighbour dismiss'd to the other World with such *Confidence* of his good Estate, suppress their just Fears, and say, *I shall have Peace, tho' I add Drunkenness to Thirst*.

But there is a further very *strange and extraordinary* Circumstance attending this Matter, *viz.* That it makes your Church perform, not to say a *Mi-*

racle, but something very like it, if not greater than that, for it *damns* and *saves* the same individual Persons. Whom it *damns* when *living*, it *saves* when *dead*. *Arians* and *Socinians*, you know, Sir, your Church declares WITHOUT DOUBT *to perish everlastingly*. But let these very Men *die*, and your Church as solemnly declares that GOD *hath in GREAT MERCY taken them to himself*, and that it *HOPES they REST IN CHRIST*. Can any Thing be more transcendant and marvellous than this! That the Man whom I pronounce WITHOUT DOUBT *to be damned*, I yet *HOPE that he is saved, i. e.* I hope *without Hope*.

But you would establish, not only the *Use*, but the Church's *divine Right*, of *MAKING Ceremonies* from the Instance of the *holy Kifs* ^b. “The *Kifs of Charity* used in the Apostolic Church, you ask, “was it a Rite of divine Appointment, or was it “not?” I answer you, that as I apprehend this Kifs of Charity cannot properly be called *a divine Institution*, nor be said to be *ordained* by the Apostles. The greeting with a Kifs, was an ancient established Usage, not only amongst the *Jews*, but the *Gentile Nations* also. This Usage therefore, or Ceremony, was not ordained by the Apostles, but only by their Advice regulated and directed to a moral and religious End. 'Tis as if they had said, 'Tis your Custom when you meet, to salute each other with a Kifs, see that it be a pure, a chaste, or holy Kifs, a Token of unfeigned Charity, Friendship and Peace.

“But if this Ceremony of the *holy Kifs*, was *not* “of divine Appointment (which probably, you “say, is the Truth of the Case) but a merely ec- “clesiastical prudential Institution, *ordained* by the “Apostles without any Precept from the Lord, or “any particular Direction of the *Holy Spirit*.”—— Then, Sir, I without the least Hesitation say, it
was

^b Lett. II. pag. 2.

was not at all obligatory as a *Law* upon the Consciences of *Christians*; they might, or they might not practise it, without sinning against God. Even *the Apostles* had *no Dominion* over the Faith and Practice of *Christians*, but what was given them by the *special* Presence and Spirit of CHRIST, the *only* Lawgiver, Lord, and Sovereign of the Church. They were to teach only the Things which he should command them. Whatever they *injoined* under the Influence of *that* SPIRIT, was to be considered and obeyed as the *Injunction* of CHRIST. But if they *injoined* any Thing in the Church (which I can by no means admit) *without* the peculiar Influence and Direction of *this* Spirit, (*i. e.* as merely fallible unassisted Men) in that Case their Injunctions had *no Authority* over Conscience: Every Man's *own Reason* had Authority to examine and discuss their Injunctions, and as they approved themselves to his *private Judgment*, to observe them, or not. Should we grant then what you ask—"That the Church in the present Age, has the same Authority and Power as the Church in the apostolic Age, considered as not being under any immediate and extraordinary Guidance of the Holy Ghost."—What will you gain by it? This same Authority and Power, is you see, Sir, really *no* Power nor Authority at all.

I proceed next "to the Point of DISCIPLINE, the Want of which you say, is objected to *your Church*; but you will represent the real State of it, and then shew that *we* really as much want it *ourselves*." We will attend *your own* Account of it, which to be sure is not too severe. You acknowledge "that the *Discipline* of the Church is of *great Moment* towards the Edification of its Members; and that the Fault is *unpardonable* when Church Governors let it fall, through a supine Carelessness and Neglect—That there is a
" great

“ great Prostration of Discipline in the Church of
 “ *England*—That it is ruined amongst you—That
 “ the Distempers of the Times are evidently too
 “ strong for it—That those who sit at the Helm,
 “ find it prudent not to bear up too much against
 “ the Impetuosity of the Storm, but to give Way
 “ till the Madness of the People be still—That the
 “ Discipline of the Church has not been carried to
 “ any Degree of Perfection—And now lies under
 “ a *general* Relaxation. — That your People are
 “ often indulg’d in all their unreasonable Demands
 “ and disorderly Ways, to prevent their putting in
 “ Execution their Threats, *that they will go to the*
 “ *Meeting*—And finally, That you have at least,
 “ the Shadow and Form of *Discipline*, and trust in
 “ God that *these dry Bones will one Day live*^d.”

This, it must be owned, is very ingenuously and frankly spoken. And can you blame then the *Dissenters*, Sir, for joining themselves to *Churches*, where that *godly Discipline* is observed, which you confess to be of so great Moment to *the Edification* of Christian People; and which your Church is *continually* wishing, but never attempts to have restored. But here you retort, and intimate as great a Want of Discipline amongst us. “ What are there
 “ no scandalous Sinners, you ask^e, no Fornicators,
 “ Adulterers, Extortioners, &c. received into your
 “ Churches! I must beg your Pardon if I demur
 “ upon this. For I could never perceive the Doors
 “ of the Meeting were ever shut against any. And
 “ if such profligate Persons be not admitted to sit
 “ at the Lord’s Table, they need not fear being admitted to all other Parts of your Worship.”

And is not this, Sir, exactly right? Ought not our Church-doors to be always kept open, that whoever will may come, and be Witness to our Way of Worship. Such *profligate* Persons therefore may come,

^d Lett. III. pag. 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, 28.
 pag. 23.

^e Lett. III.

come, if they please, and hear their Sins *reproved*, and be *exhorted* to Repentance and Amendment of Life. They are *then*, where they ought to be, under the preaching of the Word; the *Means* appointed by God, to convince and reclaim the profligate and corrupt. Were not *the Doors* of the Church at *Corinth* kept *open* in the *Apostle's* Days, for *Infidels* to come in, and be *present* at their Worship. *Vid.* 1 Cor. xiv. 23. But to *the Table of the LORD*, to partake of the Children's Bread, you seem convinced that in *our Churches*, such profligate Persons are not suffered to come. And is not this the *true Order* and *Discipline* of the Christian Church? But—Is it the same, Sir, in *your Church*? Are not some of the most profane and abandoned of Men, Rakes, Debauchees, Blasphemers of God, and Scoffers at all Religion, often seen upon their Knees around *your Communion Table*, eating the *Children's Bread*, and partaking of the *holy Elements* to qualify for *a Post*? Dare your Ministers refuse them! No, they dare not refuse the most impious *Blasphemer* the *three Kingdoms* afford, when he comes to *demand it* as a Qualification for an Office in the Army or Fleet.

And if in any *other Case*, the Priest *denies* the Sacrament to the most *infamous* Sinner dwelling in his Parish, if the Man, upon an Appeal to the *ecclesiastical Court*, can secure the Favour of the *Lay-Chancellor*, he may securely defy both the Minister and the Bishop to keep him from the Lord's Table. The *Chancellor's* Determination shall stand in Law, though *contrary* to the *Bishop's*; and the Minister be liable to a *Suspension*, for refusing Compliance; and if he is contumacious, and will not give the Man the Sacrament, even to *Excommunication* itself. How, Sir, do you reconcile *this* with your affirming, “ That your *Parish Priest* has as much Power “ as any *Presbyterian* or *congregational Minister* to “ repel open and scandalous Sinners from the “ Lord's

“ Lord’s Table ?” Or how with your “ Repre-
 “ senting the *Lay-Chancellor* as a Person *only as-
 “ sumed* by the Bishop, not to do any Act that is
 “ *purely spiritual*, but only to be his *Assistant* in his
 “ ecclesiastical and judicial Proceedings ?”

Is not the Chancellor *supreme* and *uncontrouled* in his Court, not liable to be restrained or directed by the Bishop in his *judicial Proceedings*? Does he not *finally* and *absolutely* determine on Cases of *Excommunication*, *sovereignly direct* who shall be *received* to, and who *cast out* from Christian Fellowship and Worship at the *Table of the LORD*? And is not *this* an Act as *purely spiritual*, as important and momentous, as any done in the Church? Must not *his Sentence* take Place without Controul, and is the *Minister* in publishing it any other than *his Servant*, appointed by Law to put it in Execution?

Will you please to hear, Sir, the Sentiments of a great *Prelate*^h of your own Church, upon the Point in Debate.—“ If there be any Thing in
 “ the Office of a Bishop to be challenged *peculiar*
 “ to themselves, certainly it should be this (speak-
 “ ing of *Excommunication*) yet this is in a Manner
 “ quite relinquished to their *Chancellors*; Laymen,
 “ who have no more Capacity to sentence or ab-
 “ solve a Sinner, than to dissolve the Heavens or
 “ the Earth. And this pretended Power of the
 “ *Chancellor*, is sometimes purchased with a Sum
 “ of Money. *Their Money perish with them!* Good
 “ God! what a horrid Abuse is this of the divine
 “ Authority? But this notorious Transgression is
 “ excused, as they think, by this, that a Minister
 “ called the *Bishop’s Surrogate*, but is indeed the
 “ *Chancellor’s Servant*, chosen, called, and placed
 “ there by him, to be his Crier in the Court, no
 “ better; that when he hath examined, heard,
 “ and sentenced the Cause, then the Minister, for-
 F “ sooth,

^h Lett. III. pag. 33.

^g Ibid. pag. 38.

^b Dr.

Crofts, Bishop of Hereford, Naked Truth, &c. pag. 58.

“sooth, pronounces the Sentence. Just as if the
 “Rector of a Parish Church should exclude any
 “of his Congregation, and lock him out of the
 “Church, then comes the Clerk, shews and
 “jingles the Keys, that all may take Notice that
 “he is excluded. And by this his Authority, the
 “*Chancellor* takes upon him to sentence not only
 “*Laymen*, but *Clergymen* also brought into his
 “Court for any Delinquency. And in the Court of
 “*Arches*, they sentence even *Bishops* themselves.”

“I remember when the Bishop of *Wells*, hearing of a Cause corruptly managed, and coming into Court to rectify it, the Chancellor Dr. *Duck*, fairly and mannerly bid him *be gone*, for he had no Power there to act any Thing; and there-withal pulled out his Patent, sealed by this Bishop’s Predecessor, which frightened the poor Bishop out of the Court.”——Behold! this is the Person, Sir, whom you have the Courage to represent *as only assumed by the Bishop, not to do any Act that is purely SPIRITUAL, but ONLY to be his ASSISTANT in his judicial Proceedings.*

But as we are now upon the Head of *Discipline*, and the Law called *the TEST* is a Battery which has beat down *all its Fences* around your Church, and you are a zealous Advocate for *that LAW*, you will permit me here, Sir, to enlarge a little upon *that Point*: And to ask—How you can *bear* to see the terrible Desolation it has made of your *godly Discipline*, without *Repentment* and *Grief*? Can you be jealous, Sir, for the Prosperity and Honour of your Church, and yet *patiently* view it lying in this *polluted* and *common* State? Its *Incllosures* broken up, and a Way opened *by LAW* for the most flagitious of Men, for *Atheists*, professed *Deists*, and the most *open* and *avowed* Sinners, to lie securely in its Bosom, to suck at its Breasts, to be numbered and cherished amongst its holiest and most beloved Children, and to be acknowledged before the
 World

World as honest and good *Christians*, by being *suffered* to come boldly to the *Table of the LORD*.

But why do I say *suffered*? Does not your Church by the *Force* of this Law, even *compel them to come in*? Many of the unhappy Persons, conscious of their *unfitness*, would gladly *draw back*, Knowing themselves perhaps, either to *disbelieve* the Truth, or else to *live in open Violation* of the Laws of *Christianity*, they are loth to add to their other Crimes this *Prevarication* with *Almighty God*, and Affront to *JESUS CHRIST*, and thereby to run a dreadful Risque of *eating and drinking Judgment to themselves*. But, their *All* lies at Stake: They must *qualify*, or be given up to Beggary and Want. Away therefore with *Scruples*! They rush to the Lord's Table, and partake of the *sacred Elements* with Consciences and Characters all covered with Guilt.

You will say, perhaps, it is their own Fault, they might have *refused* to come. They might, indeed, if they would have lost their Posts, their Subsistence, their Bread.—But can *the Church* reasonably expect such Sacrifices as these, from Men of corrupt Minds? Is *she* then in *no Fault*, in laying Men under such strong, almost *invincible* Temptations, to this odious Hypocrisy and Profanation of *holy Things*? Is she not highly culpable, for opening her Bosom to receive Men of *impure Characters* to all the *sacred Privileges, Liberties, and Honours*, which belong only to *sincere Christians*? Yea, for owning before the World as worthy and good Christians, *Persons* whom the *World* sees, and whom *the Church* herself cannot but see to blaspheme the Name of *CHRIST*, and to live in avowed Contempt of his Authority and Laws?

And what Relief, Sir, has the unhappy Minister, of whom as *Steward in GOD's House*, it is required that he be found FAITHFUL, and who is to answer for his Conduct to his great MASTER hereafter?

What Relief, I ask, has he, when the most *veteran Debauchee*, shall come and demand from him *these Pledges* of Christian Fellowship, and of God's paternal Love? Truly, none at all: He must receive him as a Child of God, and a dearly beloved Brother to the *Table of CHRIST*, or have an *Action* commenced against him, and be condemned perhaps in Damages more than he is worth.

As much therefore as you are concerned for the Honour of *the Church*, and for the Interest, Reputation, and Comfort of its *Clergy*, so much you ought to wish and zealously promote the Repeal of *this Law*. A Law, which whatever was its original Intention, hath in its Application let in like a *Floodgate* upon your Church, the Dregs of the human Race. A Law, which though at first designed only the more effectually to prevent all Danger to the Constitution from *Papists*, hath by an unnatural Perversion of it, actually broken down *all Distinctions* established by divine Authority, betwixt *Sacred* and *Profane*: Has thrust Infidels and Profligates into the *most holy Places* of your Temple, and brings Deists and Debauchees to eat at the Lord's Table amongst the Children of his House.—Let me ask you, Sir, in the *Name of CHRIST*, our common Master and Judge, doth not *this Law*, as now enforced, occasion the most notorious *Prostitution* of an holy Sacrament of his Religion? Is not its avowed and open Tendency and Use, to *pervert* an Institution of *our SAVIOUR* to *Ends*, not only quite different, but even opposite to *those* for which *He* appointed it? Is it not making *THAT* a *political* Instrument to *divide* Christians, which *CHRIST* instituted as a *religious* Instrument to *coalesce* and *unite* them? Must it not be highly odious and offensive to *Almighty God*, to see an *holy Sacrament*, which his Wisdom hath ordained for spiritual only and religious Purposes, thus prostituted, perverted, made an Engine and Tool of *State*, employed to
strengthen

strengthen and perpetuate *Differences* amongst good Christians ; and thereby debased, not to *worldly* only and *secular*, but to much *worse* than *worldly*, Ends ?

As to myself, Sir, I assure you, tho' I think *this Law* to be a most unrighteous Restraint upon us, and an undoubted Violation of our natural Rights ; yet I am far from being persuaded that its *Repeal* would be of the least Service to our Interest as *Dissenters*. I doubt, and have often thought, that there is too much Truth in what you say— “ *That* “ *high Trusts, public Offices, and Court-Employments,* “ *would be extremely apt to corrupt us, and to make* “ *practical Religion more visibly decay,*” and that it would really rather injure than strengthen our Interest. I have never therefore, as a *Dissenter*, been at all sollicitious for the *Repeal*. No, Sir, so far from this, that could I allow myself to *bate* and *wish ill* to the Church, I would most heartily wish it pertinaciously to hold fast this shameful Corruption. I would wish it, by no means, to give up this open Profanation of the Authority and Name of *Christ* ; this Prostitution and Perversion of an holy Sacrament of his Religion ; this Destruction of all *Discipline* ; this open Door for the Reception of the most Abominable and Profane to its most *holy Mysteries* and *Rites* : This, if I wish'd it ill, I would earnestly wish your Church *inflexibly* to continue : not doubting but, if long continued, it will surely at length bring down upon it the heavy *Anger* of *Almighty God* ; the just *Resentment* and *Jealousy* of a despised and insulted SAVIOUR ; and the deep *Scorn* and *Contempt* of all wise and thinking Men.

Whilst *this Law* continues, Sir, in its present Application, yourself cannot but see, that your *Discipline* must necessarily lie scandalously *prostrate*, *ruin'd*, *relax'd*. 'Tis impossible you can maintain, hardly the *Shadow* and *Form*, much less the *Spirit* of
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of primitive ecclesiastic Government. Your *holy Things* must lie *common*, vilely trodden under Foot. Of all Persons in the Land therefore, *the Clergy* should be the *first*, to labour with all their Might the Repeal of this *unhappy Law*. A Law, which cannot but be supposed terribly to bear hard upon, and wound the Consciences of many of them : and which subjects them to so servile a Prostitution of their Character, as cannot but load it with great Infamy and Reproach.

You tell me ⁱ, “ That you will engage, *simple* “ *as you sit here*, that this Law shall be repeal’d ; “ and our Incapacities removed, when we will lay “ down our Enmity to the Church, that is in short “ to one half Part of the Constitution.—For “ *Church* and *State* here in *England* are so incorporated and united, that they have, like the “ married Pair, the same Friends and Enemies : “ and stand or fall together.” I cannot pretend to say, Sir, how *simple* you *sat there*, when you gave us this Assurance, but I would to God you were able to *stand up*, and make it good. For,

1. Are you sure that *the Church* is really any *essential* Part at all, much less the *Half Part* of the *British* CONSTITUTION : Or, that *Church* and *State* are so married and interwoven, that they must stand or fall together ?—Many, Sir, besides Dissenters will think, that this is a very partial and wrong Representation of our most excellent Frame of Government. Let any one in his Imagination *annihilate* the Form of our *present Church*. Let him suppose its Liturgy, Clergy, Articles, Canons, with all its Ceremonies and Rites, entirely *vanish’d* from the Land : its *immense Revenues* applied in Ease of our heavy Taxes, and for the Payment of the public Debts ; and Preachers paid only by voluntary Contributions, as they are amongst *us*. Would *the STATE* hereby sustain so *essential* a Loss, that it could not thence-
forward

forward *possibly subsist*? What! would the *British* Monarchy be overthrown—Our Courts of Judicature be shut up—the Course of Law be stopp'd—Parliaments no more meet—Commerce and Trade stagnate — because what you call *the Church* is no more? Romantic and absurd! No: The Frame of our happy Government, both *civil* and *military*, might remain the *very same*: And you will give me leave to observe on the present Occasion, that in one Part of this Kingdom, those who profess themselves to be of your Church, as to its external Polity and Ceremonies, are almost to a Man inveterate avowed Enemies of our happy civil Constitution, and have risen in an impious Rebellion against his present Majesty, and joined with *Spaniards, French, Italians*, and home-bred Papists, in their wicked Attempts to subvert the Protestant Religion and Liberties.

2. This *Destruction* of the Church of *England*, is what we by no Means wish. May God in mercy prevent it, by causing her to see, in this her Day, *the Things belonging to her Peace* — We bear it no Enmity; God is our Witness. We wish it from our Souls Glory, Prosperity, Purity, Peace: The Glory of being form'd according to the *perfect Plan* of the primitive *apostolic* Church: purg'd of those Things, which yourselves *know* to be *no Parts* of the Religion of CHRIST! We wish to see it *establish'd* upon the catholic and *broad Bottom*, upon which alone it can stand firm; even the *scriptural* Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, *Jesus Christ* himself being its *only* Lawgiver and King: And not upon the narrow Basis on which it now rests, the *Articles* and *Canons*, the *Institutions* and *Inventions* of fallible and weak Men; on which it can never be strongly and firmly fixt; which are all, in the Apostle's Language, *Wood, Hay, Stubble*; whose End is to be burnt! We wish, Sir, that as it opens its Bosom, and admits the vilest Debauchees without demurring

demurring at their open Violation of God's *Commands*; so it would charitably extend its Arms to take us into its Communion, without insisting upon our Obedience to the Injunctions and *Commands of MEN*! Finally: we wish, that what God, in his Wisdom, hath been pleased to leave *indifferent*; your Church also, in her Wisdom, would be pleased to leave *the same*: That you would not attempt to *mend* the Institutions of JESUS CHRIST: But would receive us into your Church upon the same Terms and Qualifications as CHRIST and *his Apostles* would have received us into theirs; and as God will receive us into Heaven at last! — This, Sir, I assure you, is all the *Harm* we wish the Church: Judge then yourself, whether we bear it any *Enmity*; and whether you are not now bound to take from us the *Incapacities*, which you engaged, *simple as you sat there*, should on this Condition be removed.

And you will give me Leave, Sir, to think, and to hope, that there are Numbers of your worthy *Clergy* of the same Mind; that it would not at all lessen either the Glory, Stability, or Prosperity of your Church, if its Bounds were *thus enlarg'd*, to admit the *moderate Dissenters*, who sincerely desire so happy a *Coalition*. Its Enemies seem to multiply, and dark Clouds to rise around it. *Popery* is making dangerous and mighty Inroads on the one hand; and *Deism* on the other. There may come a Time, as there formerly has been, when the Frame of your Church being terribly threatened, we may again be consider'd as no despicable *Auxiliaries*. But—If we cannot be so happy, as not to be *cast out and rejected* by our Brethren; our Consolation is this, that God *judgeth in the Earth*; and that he will surely, at the *proper Season*, vindicate and plead the Cause of the Injured and Oppress'd.

But to return to the Point of *Discipline*. To the acknowledg'd Irregularity of Lay-Chancellors in your Church, you would fain “ put in Balance the
“ Lay-

“ Lay-Preaching, Lay-Praying, and Lay-Ordination allow’d in our Churches ^k.” To which I reply, that in the Generality of our Churches there is no such Thing either allow’d, or ever done. Besides, if there were: Did not your *own Church* set us the Pattern? In *the Rubrick* before the general Confession at the Communion, did it not direct?—*Then shall this general Confession be made, in the Name of all those that are to receive, either by ONE OF THEM, or else by ONE OF THE MINISTERS.* How it came to be *omitted* in the late Editions of the Common Prayer; whether it is done according to Law, and by Authority of Parliament; you, Sir, perhaps can say.

As to “ Laymen being an essential Part of all our Consistories and Synods; sitting in them, and having an equal Vote with Pastors in all Business—jointly with them *suspending* from the Lord’s Table, &c.^l” This, Sir, is no other than the *scriptural* apostolic Plan. The aggrieved Person is by our Lord, you know, *Mat. xviii. 17.* directed to *lay his Complaint before THE CHURCH, i. e. the Congregation of the Faithful:* and if the Offender *neglected to hear THE CHURCH* (the Congregation) admonishing and reproving him, he was then to be consider’d *as an beaten Man and a Publican.* So the corrupt Member, at *Corinth*, was to be solemnly excommunicated. How? Not by any particular Person, *Chancellor* or *Bishop*; but it was to be the Act of the *whole Church.* To the whole *Body or Congregation* of Believers in that City, *St. Paul* gives Directions, That when *they were come together, they should deliver such an one to Satan.*—And, that *they should put away from amongst themselves that wicked Person, 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 13.* which *Excommunication* he afterwards calls a *Punishment inflicted by the MANY, 2 Cor. ii. 6.* So in that weighty and momentous *Question*—How far the

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Gentiles

^k Lett. III. p. 38.^l Ibid. p. 37.

Gentiles were to submit to the Law of *Moses*? The *Elders* and *Brethren* are join'd with the *Apostles* in the Decision and Decree, *Acts* xv. 23. The *Laity* therefore have a *Right* to be consulted, and to judge, in these important *Church Matters*, together with the *Clergy*; as they do, by their Representatives, in what you call our *Consistories*. But with you, Sir, a *single Layman* (this is the Absurdity which you seem willing to lose sight of) I repeat it, a *single Layman*, not only in Distinction from, but in actual Opposition to, *the Bishop*, and all the Church, both *Clergy* and *Laity*, has Authority to judge and determine these important Matters; and excommunicates, or absolves; shuts out, or lets in, according to his *sole Pleasure*.

And here, Sir, let me a stop a Moment, and review the Point in Debate betwixt our good Dr. *Watts* and yourself. As for *the Lives* of the Dissenters, tho' *God knows* we have nothing whereof to *boast*, but a great Deal that calls for *Shame* and *Humiliation* on this Head; yet whether we are quite so deep immers'd in the Deluge of *Profaneness*, *Immorality*, and *Vice*, which spreads over the Land. — Whether the *Blasphemies* and *Oaths*, the *Debauchery*, *Riot*, and *guilty Excesses*, which too generally prevail, be in Proportion to our Number, found as *rife* amongst us, as amongst the Members of the *establisht Church* — must be left, and we freely leave it, to the *impartial World* to judge betwixt us.

And as to *special OBLIGATIONS* and *ADVANTAGES* for *holy Living*, which you contest strenuously with the *Doctor* to lie on your Side; what hath been above observed on your several Offices for *Confirmation*, *Absolution* of the Sick, and *Burial* of the Dead, shews them, I humbly think, to have really an ill Aspect upon the *Morals* of your People; a dangerous and apparent Tendency to cherish in them *false Hopes*, and to give them *wrong Notions* of the Terms of Acceptance, and of En-
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trance into Heaven. And of the deplorable State in which your *Discipline* lies (which you acknowledge to be of *great Moment* to the Edification of the Church) no Enemy need to wish a *sadder Account* than *yourself* have given of it. Upon the whole therefore, Sir, I cannot think, the worthy *Doct^r* to deserve *Censure*, for attempting to rouse *Dissenters* from the languishing State of Religion amongst them, by putting them in mind of the *superior Advantages* they enjoy'd, and of the *peculiar Obligations* under which they manifestly lay to greater *Holiness of Life*.

You seem not a little displeas'd^m at its having been urged as a Reason for *our Dissent*, "That your Church has shewn a persecuting Spirit," and with some Emotion ask — "Did the Church persecute at any Time its own Members? Were you or your Fathers ever persecuted while they continued in the Church? And were they driven out of it by those Persecutions?" I confess, Sir, you quite surprize me by such Questions as these. What! are you only a Stranger in *Britain*; and have never heard of the bitter Sufferings of our worthy Fathers *the PURITANS*? With what Silencings, Deprivations, Fines, Imprisonments, and lingering and cruel Deaths, for more than an *Hundred Years*, they were terribly harass'd and oppress'd by *your Church*? Have you never read, with a *bleeding Heart*, the unrelenting Rigors of your Archbishops *Parker, Bancroft, Whitegift, Laud*, — under the *first* of whom above *an hundred*; under the *second*, above *three hundred* pious and learned Men, not only *Members* but *Ministers* of your Church, were silenc'd, suspended, admonish'd, deprived, many of them loaded with grievous and heavy Fines, and shut up in filthy Jails, where they expired slowly thro' Penury and Want? And what were *the Crimes* which drew this dreadful Storm of *epi-*

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copal^m Lett. III. p. 60, 61.

copal Vengeance on them? Nothing but their Scruples about the *Surplice* and the *Cap*, about Bowing at the *Name of Jesus*, about *Christ's* Descent into Hell, and such like momentous Points.

Have you never read, Sir, what Desolations *Laud* brought upon *our Fathers*, whilst yet in your Church? How *many Hundreds* of them were sequestred, driven from their Livings, excommunicated, persecuted in the High-Commission Court, and forced to leave the Kingdom for not *punctually conforming* to all the Ceremonies and Rites; and not daring to tell their People, that they might *lawfully* profane *the Sabbath* by Gambols and Sports; and to publish from their Pulpits the *Permission* of the *King* to *break the Command of God*—And yet you ask—“*Were your Fathers ever persecuted while they continued in the Church?*”

Pray! what was it peopled the savage Desarts of *North America*? Was it not the *Thousands* of persecuted and oppress'd Families, who fled from *tyrannising BISHOPS*? Who not being suffer'd to worship quietly in their *native Country*, as their Consciences directed, sought a peaceful Retreat from the Rage of their *Fellow-Christians* amongst more *hospitable Indians*.—To omit a thousand Acts of Cruelty, which thro' several successive Reigns *our Fathers* suffer'd not only *from*, but when actually *in, the Church*.—Did she not at last, in a most arbitrary and unrighteous Manner *cast out* at once above *two thousand* of them, excellent and pious Ministers, and abandon them, and their starving Families, to great Poverty and Distress? To *heighten* that Distress, did not your Church, by *another Act*, banish them *five Miles* from any *City, Burrough, or Church* in which they had before served: and thereby put them at a *proper Distance* from their Acquaintance and Friends, who might minister to their Relief? Did she not by *another Act* forbid their meeting to *worship God*, any where but in your *own Churches*,
under

under the Penalties of heavy Fines, Imprisonments, and Banishment to foreign Lands?

In Consequence of these *cruel* Acts, were not vast Numbers of *pious Clergymen*, our Forefathers (once the *Glory* of your Church) with Multitudes of their People, laid in Prisons amongst Thieves and common Malefactors, where they suffered the greatest Hardships, Indignities, Oppressions; their Houses were rudely rifled, their Goods made a Prey to hungry Informers, and their Families given up to Beggary and Want. “An Estimate was published of near *eight Thousand* Protestant *Dis-senters*, who had perished in Prison in the Reign only of *Charles II.* By severe Penalties inflicted on them, for assembling to worship God, they suffered in their Trade and Estates in the Compass of a few Years, at least two Millions; and a List of *sixty Thousand* Persons was taken, who had suffered on a religious Account, betwixt the *Restoration* and the *Revolution*.”—Behold, the Groans and the Blood of Myriads of oppressed *Puritans*, which cry beneath the Altar, *How long, O LORD!* But you are *deaf* to all their Groans—And with Insensibility enough ask—*Were your Fathers ever persecuted?*—

“But the Presbyterian and Independant Churches have each in their Day of Power, discovered as much, and indeed *more* of that Spirit.” Too much of that *bad Spirit* ’tis acknowledged, they have *each* shewn. But surely there is *no Comparison* betwixt the Cruelties and Oppressions of your Church, and of their’s. Your *little Finger*, has been *thicker than their Loins*.

“But whatever the Church may have been heretofore, you affirm, it is not *now* of a persecuting Spirit: And that there is not the least Appearance of its having disquieted and oppressed any
“ on

* Vid. *Neal's Hist. Purit.* Vol. IV. p. 554.
p. 61.

• Lett. III.

“ on Account of Religion, for more now than half
 “ a Century ^{p.}” You had forgot, Sir, the famous
Schism, and *occasional Conformity* ACTS, which long
 since that Date *much disquieted* and *oppressed* us.
 The *Test* and the *Corporation* ACTS had also slipped
 your Memory, which at *this Time* deprive us of
 valuable and important Privileges, to which as
 faithful Subjects, and Members of the *Common-*
wealth, we think we have a natural undoubted Right.

The present Governors of your Church indeed,
 (Thanks be to Heaven for it) are too wise and too
 righteous, to permit *Persecution* to rage against us.
 But to *their* Clemency and Justice, Sir, not to the
 kind and benevolent *Spirit* and *Constitution* of your
 Church, I humbly apprehend we owe it, that we
 are not *at this Time* severely persecuted and op-
 pressed. If the ACT of *Uniformity*, which to be
 sure you will call a *grand Pillar* of your Church, is
 not a very unrighteous and persecuting *Act*, yet
 several of your *Canons* breathe, you know, Sir, a
 very cursing and persecuting *Spirit*. By the *for-*
mer, “ Whoever shall declare or speak any Thing
 “ in the Derogation or Depraving of the Book of
 “ *Common Prayer*, or any Thing therein contained,
 “ or any Part thereof, he shall for the *first* Offence
 “ suffer *Imprisonment* for *one whole Year*, without
 “ Bail or Mainprize; and for the second Offence,
 “ be *imprisoned* DURING LIFE.” Here I affirm
 nothing, but appeal to the whole World; I ap-
 peal, Sir, to your own Conscience, whether this
 be or be not an *unjust* and a *persecuting* ACT? By
 the latter, the *Canons*, “ If any Man shall affirm
 “ any of the Things contained in the Book of *Ar-*
 “ *ticles*, *Common Prayer*, or of *Ordination* ;” (in
 which yet there are *many Things* acknowledged by
 your own most learned Divines, and I doubt not,
 by yourself to need Alteration; your IV, V, VI,
 VII, and VIIIth *Canons*, thunder out upon him a
 terrible

terrible *Excommunication, ipso facto*¹, by which he is to be cut off as a cankered and rotten Member, and not to be restored, till he hath repented and publickly revoked his *wicked Errors*. Doth not this favour, Sir, of an antichristian and persecuting Spirit?

But you seem not, with Submission, to have *yourself*, a just Horror of the dreadful Sin of *Persecution*, and to be a little too deeply tinged with this *fanatical Spirit*: For you call aloud for “ the *Church’s Sword* to fall upon *Hereticks*, as well as “ upon *immoral Persons*: And put me in Mind, “ that by that ancient Discipline” (which you *wish* to see restored) “ *open Schismatics* were treated almost as *roughly* as any Sort of Offenders whatsoever.” By *Hereticks*, no doubt you mean, those whom you take to be such: And by *open Schismatics*, those who are withdrawn from *your Church*: *These* you wish to see *roughly handled*, and to have the *Church’s Sword* drawn upon them. But, God *Almighty* be praised! We live under so just a Government, as is not, we hope, like to gratify this *cruel Wish*.

Do you not remember, Sir, that the *first Reformers* were counted *Hereticks* and *open Schismatics*,
by

¹ Concerning an *Excommunication ipso facto*, our late learned Primate, Dr. Wake, has observed. “ *First*, That there is no “ Need in this Case, of any *Admonition*, as where the Judge is “ to give Sentence; but every one is to take Notice of the *Law*, “ at his Peril, and to see that he be not overtaken by it. And, “ *Secondly*, That there is no Need of any Sentence to be pronounced, which the Canon itself has passed; and which is by “ that Means already promulgated upon every one, as soon as he “ comes within the Obligation of it. In other Cases, a Man “ may do Things worthy of Censure, and yet behave himself so “ warily in them as to escape the Punishment of the Church, “ for Want of legal Evidence to convict him. But *Excommunication* Canonis ligat etiam occulta Delicta. Where the Canon “ gives Sentence, there is no escaping; but the Conscience of “ every Man becomes obliged by it, as soon as ever he is sensible, “ that he has done that which was forbidden, under the Pain of “ such an *Excommunication*.” *Appeal in Behalf of the King’s Supremacy*, p. 22. ² Lett. III. p. 12, 21.

by the Top Churchmen amongst whom they lived? That JESUS CHRIST and his *Apostles* were counted the very same? That our *dear Brethren* in *France*, who are now *bleeding* under the Church's Sword, are most confidently reckoned *such*, by all the *Rulers* and *Priests* there? But is it fit that these *Hereticks* should be thus *roughly handled*? Or, is it *those only*, whom you are pleased to call by *that Name*, who merit these *rough Measures*? Whenever, Sir, you shall produce your Patent from Heaven, constituting you JUDGE of HERESY, and shall be able *authoritatively* and *infallibly* to pronounce *what is*, and *what is not*, to be punished as *SUCH*, *then* the Church's Sword will, I hope, be put into your Hands. But till *then*, Sir, 'tis much *safer* to let it remain *sheathed*; lest under the Notion of *Hereticks*, you fall upon and roughly handle, Men better than yourself. This has ever been the Case, since the Days of the Apostles, when *Ecclesiasticks* have presumed authoritatively to draw and use the *Church's Sword*.

But you add, " 'Tis well we can't say your Church has shewn a *dividing* Spirit, and *actually* divided itself by an open Schism, from a sound Part of the Catholic Church; *that*, indeed, would have been an *unanswerable Reason* for your dissent." Yes, *this* also, Sir, we can say, and therefore stand *justified* by your own Concession. That misguided unhappy Prince *Charles I.* and his furious Primate *Laud*, began this *fatal Schism*, in Complaisance to the Church of *Rome*, and actually divided the *Church of England* from a sound Part of the Catholic Church; and the same *schismatical Spirit* has ever since too generally prevailed in it.

The *Dutch*, *Walloon*, and *French* Churches here in *England*, were established by Charters from several of our Princes; but Lord *Clarendon* informs us, " The *Bishops* growing jealous that the countenan-

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“ cing *another* Discipline of the Church here by
 “ Order of State, would at least *diminish* the Re-
 “ putation and Dignity of the *episcopal* Govern-
 “ ment,” got them suppressed. “ And that this
 “ might be sure to look like *more* than what was
 “ *necessary* to the *CIVIL Policy* of the Kingdom,
 “ whereas in all former Times, the Ambassadors
 “ and all foreign Ministers of State employed from
 “ *England*, into any Parts where the *reformed Re-*
 “ *ligion* was exercised, frequented their Churches,
 “ and gave all *possible Countenance* to their Pro-
 “ fession; the *contrary* to this was now with *great*
 “ *Industry* practised, and some Advertisements, if
 “ not Instructions, given to the Ambassadors there
 “ (*Le Clerc* says they were *ordered*) to *forbear* any
 “ extraordinary Commerce with Men of that Pro-
 “ fession. And Lord *Scudamore*, the last ordinary
 “ Ambassador there, not only declined going to
 “ *Charenton* (the *Protestant* Church) but furnished
 “ his own Chappel with Wax-candles on the Com-
 “ munion-table, &c. And besides, was careful
 “ to publish upon all Occasions by himself, and
 “ those who had the nearest Relation to him, that
 “ the *Church of ENGLAND* looked not upon the *Hugo-*
 “ *nots of FRANCE*, as a Part of THEIR COMMU-
 “ NION; which was likewise too much, and too
 “ industriously discoursed at Home.” Behold
 here, Sir, the Church of *England*, actually dividing
 itself from a *sound Part* of the Catholic Church!
 For *such* surely you will own the brave *Protestants*
 in *France*, who have born *Testimony* to the Faith by
 so great and so glorious a *Fight of Afflictions*, and
 sealed it with *Seas of Blood*.

I would also put you in Mind of another Fact,
 that seems to have escaped your Reading, or Me-
 mory. Upon the Queen of *Bohemia*'s earnest Solici-
 tation with the King her Brother (*Charles I. Anno*
 1634) a Collection was ordered throughout *England*,

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for

for the poor persecuted Ministers of the Palatinate, who were banished their Country for their Religion. In the Brief which was granted for this Purpose, was this Clause: *Whose Cases are the more to be deplored, because this Extremity is fallen upon them, for their Sincerity and Constancy in the true Religion, which we together with them profess.* Archbishop Laud excepted against this Clause, and denied that the Religion of the Palatine Churches was the same with ours, because they were Calvinists, and their Ministers had not Episcopal Ordination. Laud acquainted the King with his Objections. The Clause was ordered to be expunged, and the brave unhappy *Palatines* were thus publicly disowned by the Governors of the Church, who in all reasonable Construction, must be supposed to know and speak its Sense, and not allowed to be Professors of the same true Religion^u. How unchristian and schismatical this!

Of the like *Schism* was it also guilty, in the *Occasional Conformity Act*, which took Place in a late Reign. For it thereby FORBID under *severe Penalties*, all its Members who had any Places of Profit or Trust, to worship or hold Communion with any of the foreign Churches, *Dutch, French, &c.* in those Kingdoms, in which its *Liturgy* was not used. And should any Minister of any of the *reformed Churches* of *Scotland, France, Germany, Holland*, now come into *England*, would your Church receive them *as Ministers*, or admit them *as such*, to *officiate* in its public Worship? I presume you know, Sir, she would not. But is not this *virtually* renouncing their Communion? Nor will you admit even the *Lay Members* of any of these *foreign Churches*, to your Communion at the *Lord's-supper*, except besides what CHRIST has ordered, they will submit also to some *Order and Institution* of YOUR OWN.

Now

^u Neal's Hist. Purit. Vol. II. p. 271.

Now your great *Stillingfleet* ^w hath thus determined—"That which *confines*, must also *divide* the Church; for by that *Confinement*, a *Separation* is made betwixt the Parties confined, and the other; which Separation must *be made*, by the Party *so limiting* Christian Communion." Upon the whole then, 'tis most evident, that *your Church* has shewn, and does shew, a *schismatical* and *dividing* Spirit, has actually *divided itself* from sound Parts of the universal Church. *This* therefore you will please to take, as *an unanswerable Reason* for our *dissent*.

You must excuse me, Sir, if I think you treat a great deal *too severely* a worthy Body of Men, *our* MINISTERS; when you represent them as "Persons whom the Faithful, far from being permitted to enter into any *Pastoral Relation* to them, are not permitted to have any *Christian Communion* with them; no, not so much as any *intimate unnecessary* Acquaintance and Familiarity with them in *common Life* ^x."—And tell me—"They are not duly ordained to their Office; that their Administrations are most certainly irregular, an unnecessary and wanton, if not a factious Departure from the primitive Order. And that therefore I cannot depend, at least with so much Assurance, as is requisite to the Peace and Acquiescence of my Mind, that such Ordinances will be blessed to me ^y."—I have weighed this Matter with a good deal of Attention, and upon the whole am fully satisfied, both from *Scripture* and *Antiquity*, that *Presbyters* have a Right to, and did from the Apostles Times actually *ordain*. There are *two* Things, amongst many others, which I beg Leave to offer to your Consideration upon this Point.—

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I.

^w Ration. Account, p. 359. ^x Lett. II. p. 8. ^y Lett. I. p. 73.

1. That the Ministers of the *Reformed Churches* in all foreign Parts, have almost all of them, I apprehend, no other than *Presbyterian Ordination*.

The whole Company of illustrious Protestant Churches of *Scotland, France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark*, except perhaps *Sweden, &c.* have none but *Presbyterian Ordination* amongst them. For *Luther, Calvin, Bercer, Melancton, Bugenhagen, &c.* and all the first *Reformers and Founders* of these Churches, who ordained Ministers amongst them, were themselves *Presbyters* and no other. And though in some of these Churches, there are *Ministers* which are called *Superintendants, or Bishops*, yet these are only *primi inter Pares*^z, the first among Equals; not pretending to any *Superiority of ORDER*. Having themselves no other Orders than what either *Presbyters* gave them, or was given them as *Presbyters*, they can convey no other to those they ordain^a. You are a Gentleman of too great Discernment to urge the stale Pretence, that this is to these Churches a Matter not of *Choice*, but of *Necessity and Force*. For if they thought *episcopal Ordination*, I do not say necessary, but even more *regular or expedient*, could they not with the greatest Ease immediately obtain it? Would not the Church of *England*, upon the least Intimation of their Willingness to receive it, most readily send them *Bishops* to supply this Defect? You know, Sir, too well its charitable Disposition, and even *Offers* of this kind, in the least to suspect it. Whatever *Censures* you pass then upon the *Orders and Administrations* of the Ministers amongst us, they equally fall upon all the *Reformed Churches*

^z Account of *Denmark*, p. 253. ^a The *Danish Church* is indeed at this Time governed by *Bishops*. But they look upon *Episcopacy* as only an human Institution; and the first Protestant Prelates in that Kingdom, were ordained by *Bugenhagen*, a meer *Presbyter*; who by Consequence, could convey no other than a *Presbyterian Ordination* to their Successors ever since. *See kendorff. Hist. Lutheran. Lib. 29. Sect. 1. With Caveat, p. 15.*

Churches throughout the whole *Protestant World*. If *ours* are an unnecessary and wanton Departure from the primitive Order, *theirs* are the same. Now it gives me great Pleasure to see myself in such a Crowd of excellent and good Company. And unless you can offer something more *demonstrative* on this Head, than I have ever yet seen, my Mind will enjoy *full Peace* as to the Regularity of the Ministration on which I attend. But,

2. It seems a little strange to hear you glorying over *us*, and consequently over all the *foreign Churches*, as to this Matter of ORDERS, when these *very ORDERS* in which you glory, you acknowledge to have derived ONLY from the *Church of ROME*. *A Church* which yourselves, in your Homilies, confess to be *idolatrous* and *antichristian*, “ Not only an *Harlot*, as the Scripture calleth her, “ but also a foul, filthy, old, wither’d *Harlot*; the “ *foulest* and *filthiest* that ever was seen.—And that “ as it at present is, and hath been for 900 Years, “ it is so far from the Nature of the TRUE *Church*, “ that nothing can be more ^b.”—*Note*. These *Homilies* every Clergyman publickly declares, and subscribes with his Hand, that they contain a *godly and wholesome Doctrine*, fit to be read in Churches by Ministers.

Now it is ONLY, Sir, from this *filthy, wither’d, old HARLOT*, that you derive, by Ordination, your *spiritual Descent*. You confess yourselves *born of her*, as to *ecclesiastical Pedigree*: And the Sons of this foulest and filthiest of Harlots, you acknowledge as *Brethren*, by admitting *their Orders* as regular and valid; whereas *those* of the *Protestant Churches* you reject. If a *Priest*, ordained with all the superstitious and idolatrous Rites of this *antichristian* and *false Church*, comes over to the Church of *England*; you admit him as a BROTHER, *duly ordained*; without obliging him to pass under *that Ceremony*

^b Vid. Homilies, p. 162, 295.

Ceremony again : But if a Minister of the *Reform'd Churches* joins himself to you, you consider *him* as but a *Layman*, an *unordain'd Person*, and oblige him to receive *Orders* according to your Form. How, Sir, is it possible to account for this Procedure ! Can *that Church*, which is *no true Church*, impart *valid and true Orders* ? Can a *filty old Harlot* produce any other than a *spurious and corrupt Breed* ? Will you rest the *Validity and Regularity* of your Administrations on your receiving the *sacerdotal Character* from the Bishops and Popes of the *Romish Church* ? Many, if not most, of whom, were Men of most corrupt and infamous Lives ; *Men*, who were so far from being *regular and valid* MINISTERS in the Church of JESUS CHRIST, that they were not so much as *regular or real* MEMBERS of it at all ; and therefore could not possibly, *duly*, or *regularly* OFFICIATE therein ; consequently, had *no Power* to communicate or convey *Orders or Offices* in the CHRISTIAN Church. Whatever *Offices* they convey'd therefore, are at best doubtful and suspicious ; if not absolutely null, irregular, and void.—So that really your own *Orders*, if strictly examin'd, may minister great Doubt and Disquietude of Mind.

If *Charity* then were silent ; *Prudence*, methinks, should loudly dictate, that you *speak gently* as to the Authority and Orders of *our Ministers*, when you know it is in their Power so strongly to *retort*. It was therefore surely not *wise*, Sir, as well as extremely *unkind*, to set them up as Objects of public Odium and Avoidance ; and to admonish “ every “ good Man not to have any intimate or unnecessary “ Acquaintance with them, or Familiarity in common “ Life.” But——BLESSED, our Lord hath said, *are ye, when Men shall hate you, and SEPARATE YOU from their COMPANY, and CAST OUT your Names as EVIL, for the Son of Man's sake : REJOICE*
ye

ye in that Day, and leap for joy; for behold, your Reward in Heaven is great ^c!

You very strenuously contest what you call “one of the favourite and fundamental Principles of the Dissention, namely, *That every Lay-Christian has a Right to chuse his own Pastor*^d.” A Right so evidently founded on *Reason, Scripture*, and the undoubted *Practice* of the primitive Church, and so generally acknowledg’d by *all the learned* of your own Communion, that I cannot but a little wonder at the Alertness with which you make your Attack upon it. The *Charge* given to the Christian People — *To take heed what they hear — to beware of false Prophets — not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits* — incontestibly proves them to have a *Right of Judgment* and of *Choice*, relating to this Matter: And that *this Right*, which God has given them, it is *their Duty* to use.

When an *Apostle* was to be chosen in the Room of *Judas the Traitor*, the *whole Body* of the Disciples were applied to on that Occasion, *Acts i.* who APPOINTED by *common Suffrage*, two from their whole Number to be *Candidates* for that Office, § 23. “*The Election*, you say, *was evidently made by God* ^e.” But was it not *as evidently* made by *the People* also? If the Choice of ONE from the two be acknowledg’d to be the Act of GOD; was not the Choice of *these* two, from amongst the *whole Number*, as much the Act of the People? The People then were *actually* concern’d in that Choice. “*The seven Deacons, Acts vi.* you say, *were but presented or recommended by the Brethren*^f.” But let the sacred Story judge — *Wherefore, Brethren, LOOK YE OUT amongst you, seven Men of honest Report: And the Saying pleased the whole Multitude, and they CHOSE Stephen and Philip, &c.* — Can Words be more express?

That

^c Luke vi. 22, 23.

^d Lett. II. p. 6.

^e Ibid. p. 8.

^f Ibid.

That *Bishops* and *Pastors* were chosen in the *ancient Church* by the Suffrage of the *People*, the Evidence is so strong, as greatly to try the Countenance of the Person who disputes it. *Ignatius*, if you will allow him genuine, says *πρεπου εστιν υμιν ως εκκλησια θεου χειρολουνσαι επισκοπον &c.* It becomes you as the Church of God to CHUSE a Bishop. *Alexander* was made Bishop of *Jerusalem*, by the Compulsion or CHOICE of the Members of that Church. Upon the Death of *Anterus*, Bishop of *Rome*, All the People met together in the Church to CHUSE a Successor — and they all took *Fabianus* and placed him in the episcopal Chair. So *Cornelius*, his Successor, was ELECTED by the Suffrage of the Clergy and Laity. *Cyprian* often acknowledges he was made Bishop of *Carthage*, *Favore Plebis—Populi universi Suffragio, &c.* By the FAVOUR and VOTE of all the People^h. And expressly says, *Plebs maxime habet Potestatem, vel eligendi dignos Sacerdotes, vel indignos recusandi.* The chief Power of CHUSING worthy Ministers, and of REJECTING the unworthy, belongs to THE PEOPLE. I produce no further Evidence upon a Point so incontestible, but the Words of a learned Brother of your own, high enough for Church Power, “ That
“ the People had Votes in the Choice of Bishops all
“ must grant ; and it can be only IGNORANCE and
“ FOLLY that pleads the contrary ⁱ.”

“ You think a Man provides very well for his
“ Soul, who submits himself to the Instructions,
“ and devoutly attends all the Administrations of
“ an able and orthodox Minister, by whomsoever pro-
“ vided. And it will be confessed, you suppose,
“ that the King, and Bishops, Lord-Chancellor, No-
“ bility, and Gentry, who are our greater Patrons,
“ are more competent Judges of the Abilities and
“ Orthodoxy of Clergymen, and of their Fitness
“ for particular Stations, than the common Run of
“ Men,

^g Epist. ad Philad.

the Primitive Church, p. 46.

^h Vid. Constitut. and Discipline of

ⁱ Lowth of Church Power.

“ Men, especially *the Vulgar* ^k.” But imagine yourself, Sir, for a Moment on the other Side the Water, preaching this wholesome Doctrine to the good *Protestants* in *France*. If *Kings, Bishops, &c.* have Authority and Right to *appoint Pastors* to the People, then the People *are bound* to receive and attend *the Pastors* they send. But if this be *right* in one Country (I must again put you in Mind) ’tis *right* also in another; unless *one Kingdom* can produce a Warrant, or Charter from Heaven giving it *such Authority*, which *other Kingdoms* have not. If this Doctrine be Truth in *England*, ’tis Truth also in *France*. The brave *Protestants* then have *rashly* and *unwarrantably* withdrawn themselves from the Pastors, whom their *King* and *Bishops* had set over them; they ought to return, and submit to their *established* Guides, and not *proudly* attempt to find Ministers more able and orthodox, than those *their Superiors* have solemnly deputed to that Trust. —Will you stand, Sir, to this Doctrine? If not, you must allow every Man a Right to judge for himself.

To the common and just Plea—“ That every
 “ Man has as good Right to chuse his own *Pastor*,
 “ to whom to commit the Care of his Soul, as to
 “ chuse his *Lawyer* or *Physician*, with whom he
 “ intrusts his Body or Estate,” you reply:
 “ Physicians in many Places are provided by Go-
 “ vernors for those who are sick, as in *Chelsea*, and
 “ other Hospitals, whilst no body dreams of any
 “ Incroachment upon their natural Rights ^l.” But
 tell me, Sir, would you not complain, if when-
 ever you were sick, you were OBLIGED to accept of
 this *public Provision*; and MUST commit yourself to
 the Care of those Gentlemen of the Faculty who
 officiated in the Hospital, supposing you lived near
 it, whatever Notion you had of their Fidelity or
 Skill? Or should a *Physician* be provided, and esta-
 I blished

^k *Lowth* on Church Power, p. 9.

^l *Ibid.* p. 13.

blished by *Law* in each Parish of this Kingdom, would you not call it an *Infringement* of your natural Right, to be *obliged* to call him in (however *ignorant* or *uncapable* you took him to be) and to commit your Health to his Care; especially if there was at Hand *another*, licensed by Authority, whom you thought to have better Judgment, and from whose Prescripts you had received frequent and signal Relief? I am persuaded in this Case, you would strongly and very justly *complain* of the Restraint. But every Man surely, is as capable, and has as undoubted a Right *to judge* and *to chuse* what Minister to attend for the Edification of his Soul, as what Physician to use for the Recovery of his Health.

“ No, you reply, there is a Difference in the
 “ *two* Cases; your *Pastors* are your *Guides* and
 “ *Governors*, to whom you owe *Subjection* in spiri-
 “ tual Things: And it is not, I think, quite so
 “ reasonable to challenge to yourselves the chusing
 “ of these, as of the other who have *no Authority*
 “ over you ^m.” But I beseech you, good Sir,
 who MADE *them* my GOVERNORS? Who GAVE
them this Rule and Authority over me? Does every
 gay STRIPLING, just emancipated from the College,
 that can get (and there are *various Ways* of getting,
 you know Sir, not fit to be here mentioned) to be
 inducted into a good Living, does he, I ask, thence-
 forward become GOVERNOR of *all the Souls* dwell-
 ing in his Parish, to whom they owe SUBJECTION
 in *spiritual Things*? What, must all the learned,
 the wise, the grave and experienced Persons resid-
 ing in that Parish, consider the *enrobed Youth* as
 their *spiritual RULER*, vested with AUTHORITY
 over *them*, in Things pertaining to GOD, to Con-
 science, and to Eternity! Yes, *he has AUTHORITY*,
 you say, over me, I OWE him *spiritual Subjection*.
 But how far, Sir, does the Authority of my young
 RULER

^m *Lowth* on Church Power, p. 14.

RULER extend? Must I *believe* whatever he tells me, because *He* hath said it; or, *do* whatever he commands me, because *He* hath enjoined it; or, follow my *spiritual Guide* wherever *He* shall lead me, without considering, examining, and judging for myself, whither the Course tends? And if I happen to think he is leading me *wrong*, must I still *obey* and *submit* to my *ghostly* DIRECTOR, and trust God with the Event? Am I to deliver myself up ENTIRELY, or only *a little*, and *in Part*, to his sacerdotal *Authority*? And must I see Things in Religion, *only* and *always* by the Eyes of my *Over-seer*, or ought I not also *sometimes*, at least, to see with *my own*? Will you please to inform me also, whether as my *young* GOVERNOR undertakes *to judge for me* now, he will also undertake *to be judged for me* hereafter; and *to be damned for me* too, if I happen to go astray, by going as *he* directs?—A certain *Nobleman*, not half a Century ago, got his *Huntsman* inducted into a good Living; and from the *Care of his Hounds*, advanced him to the Priesthood and to the *Cure of Souls*. Now from the Time of his Investiture with this new Character and Office, he became the GOVERNOR *and* GUIDE, *it seems*, of *all the Souls* in his Parish, and they OWED *him* *Subjection in spiritual Things*. If a *Lock* then, a *Newton*, or even his *Lordship* himself who gave him the Living, had dwelt within its Bounds, they *ought* reverently to regard HIM as their *spiritual* GOVERNOR *and* DIRECTOR; and to *submit themselves to him*, as having THE RULE *over them*, and *watching for their Souls*.—But are these *Claims* to be vouched, or is this *Doctrine* to be preached, in this Age of Liberty and Light? Let them for the Honour of CHRISTIANITY, be eternally suppressed.—I am forced then to return, Sir, to the Point whence I set out, and to acknowledge *the Right* which every Man has, in Things of Religion,

to call no Man upon Earth MASTER, but to examine and judge, and chuse for himself.

As to the *Manner* in which the Choice of our Ministers is conducted, against which you except, I believe no Elections of any kind, are transacted with greater *Fairness* and *Equity* than these. And the Nature of the Thing speaks, that thus it must be. For *ours* being *Assemblies* formed only by *Consent*, and supported only by *voluntary* Contributions of their Members, any oppressive or iniquitous Management would throw them presently into Confusion, disband and break them up. To your Question—*Who are the Electors?* And to all the Objections you raise on that Head—I reply, by praying you to turn your Eyes, Sir, to a *British Parliament*, or to an *English Convocation*, and tell me, *who are the Electors?* And how is the Choice conducted? But if both the *Parliament* and *Convocation*, notwithstanding the enormous Disproportion and Inequality of the *Electors*, be yet accounted and gloried in as the REPRESENTATIVE of the Nation; and you compliment your *Fellow Britons* upon their *invaluable Privilege* in being ruled by Laws of *their own making*, and in paying no Taxes, but what *themselves* by their Representatives, have consented to levy.—Your Exceptions to our Elections will be presently withdrawn, and you will still give us Leave to glory, as possessing this ancient undoubted Right of the Christian Church.

But 'tis Time, Sir, that I now release your Patience and Attention, having strained, I fear, both to their utmost Extent. There are many other Parts of your Letters as liable to Remark, as those I have taken Notice of, but I would not be tedious.—I might have expostulated with you largely on your reading, as Parts of your public Worship, the fabulous and gross *Legends* of *Bel and the Dragon*, of *Judith* and *Susannah*; and above all, the *magical Romance* of receiving a fair Virgin from the *Inchantments* of her

her *infernal Lover*, and conjuring away the *amorous Devil Asmodeus*, by the Fumes of a Fish's Liver— Is it for the Honour of the *Christian Name*, think you Sir, to have such *spurious and idle Tales* read solemnly in our Churches (if *solemnly* they can be read) and made Parts of our *public Worship*? What will an *Unbeliever* think, when present at such Worship! When he sees *such Things* not only bound up with the HOLY SCRIPTURES, but commanded to be read *as such* in the *Order* of the Common Prayer! Will it not heighten his Contempt of the *Credulity* of Believers, and establish his Prejudices against the History, the Miracles, and Doctrines of CHRIST?—

I might also have asked you, Sir, to what *Oriental DEITY* you pay your Devoirs, when from the *North*, the *South*, the *West*, the Worshippers in your Church on certain solemn Occasions, turn reverently towards *the EAST*, and make their *peculiar Honours*? To WHOM, Sir, I beseech you, are these *peculiar Honours* paid? Not surely to the *immense, omnipresent* JEHOVAH; he is an INFINITE Spirit, you know, alike present in all Places; not more confined to one Quarter of the Heavens, than to another: To represent him as *being so*, is to dishonour and offend him, to detract from the Glory of his *Immensify* or *Omnipresence*, and to give Men very false and unworthy Notions of God. This worshipping towards *the EAST*, is not, I think, *ordered* by any Canon of your Church, which is now generally received; but 'tis (if I mistake not) its *common* and *prevailing* Practice. I should be glad to be informed, for I assure you, Sir, I am quite ignorant, what *Shadow of Ground*, either from Reason or Scripture, you can possibly pretend, for this unaccountable *Superstition*, for such you must allow me at present to think it. If you say, The Worship is paid *toward the ALTAR*, this seems to make the Matter more inexplicable still. For *what* is there in *the ALTAR*, to make it a proper Object of

of *religious* Veneration? Indeed, whilst the *Bread* God was upon it, the People who believed it to be the *very Body* of CHRIST, did well to pay their Homage to it: But now *that* IDOL is taken thence, I cannot for my Life perceive, what Shadow of *Divinity* Protestants see in the ALTAR, that they should give it *religious* Honours.

As much, Sir, am I at a Loss, when endeavouring to reconcile to Reason and good Sense, another of your *additional Beauties and Splendors* of public Worship, *viz. Bowing at the Name of JESUS*. As for that Passage of the Apostle, *Philip. ii. 10. That at the Name of JESUS every Knee shall bow*—the learned Men of your Church, I presume, *universally* disclaim it, as in the least *authorizing* or *injoining* this Practice. Your great Dr. *Nichols*^a vindicates your Church from such an *uncouth and ridiculous Abuse* of this Text, and affirms, *that it is not once mentioned in any of your ecclesiastical Constitutions*, as to this Matter; and adds, *that you are not so DULL as to think, that those Words can be rigorously applied to this Purpose*. But if *this Text* be acknowledged not in the least to authorize or require this *Act of Worship*, what Shadow of Argument, Sir, can you possibly bring, either from *Reason* or *Scripture*, which shall so much as seem to support it? Why then does your Church command (Canon XVIII.) *that when in Time of divine Service the LORD JESUS shall be mentioned, duly and lowly Reverence shall be done by all Persons present*? Is not *this*, Sir, by your own Confession, an *Act of Will Worship*, a *Commandment*, an *Invention of Men*, not in the least founded upon the Authority and Will of God!

But why, Sir, must this *lowly Reverence* be made at the *Name of JESUS*, and not at the Name of CHRIST, at the Name IMMANUEL, JEHOVAH, or GOD? Is there not in *all these*, something at least as venerable

^a Defence, &c. Part II. p. 319.

venerable and worthy of *peculiar* Honours; indeed something *much more* so, than there is in the *Name* of JESUS; a *Name* not at all *peculiar* to our blessed Saviour, but which was *common* to him with a great many other Men?—But if this *peculiar Reverence* must be made at the *Name* of JESUS, why not at *all Times* whenever 'tis mentioned, at least in public Worship? Why in the *Creed* only, which is but a *human* Composition, and not every Time 'tis read from the *Gospels* and *Epistles*, which were indited by the HOLY GHOST? But I press no further a *Point*, which I believe few of your own Church think capable of a rational and solid Defence.—

I have now finished my Reply, Sir, to the *Letters* with which you have publicly honoured me, and have with Freedom set before you, the chief *Difficulties* and *Objections* which keep me in a State of Separation from your Church. If by calm and fair Argument, you can shew my *Objections* to be futile and weak, I shall with Pleasure become your *Convert*, and readily obey the Calls of worldly Interest and Honour.

But as you, Sir, have the *Dignities*, *Emoluments*, and *Powers* of this World on your Side, you must give us Leave to think, at least till we are better taught, that we have TRUTH on our's. TRUTH, which is GREAT, and *will finally prevail*. Nor am I, Sir, without Hope, that, upon an *impartial* Review of the Merits of the Cause betwixt us, *omnipotent* TRUTH may even bend *your* Mind towards us; and dispose you, like *one* who has since had the Honour of being called the *great Apostle*, to join yourself to *those* you once censured and despised.

What though we have not the *Honours* and *Profits* of this World to draw you to our Communion, are we ever the less like to be the genuine *Apostolic Church* of a crucified, despised, insulted JESUS for this? Hath he not expressly told us, that *His*

Kingdom is not of this World°.—That whoever will come after him, must deny himself, and take up his Cross ^p.—That not many mighty and noble are called ^q?—Are not the Witnesses to TRUTH, to Prophecy, cloathed in Sackcloth^r, till the promised Times of Refreshing come from the Appearance of CHRIST? Is not the PURE Apostolic Church, the true Spouse of CHRIST, represented in the Revelation as a Woman driven into the Wilderness^s, i. e. in an afflicted and forsaken State; whilst the corrupt and antichristian Church (the apostate Church of Rome) is caressed and enriched by the Kings of the Earth^t, glittering in all the Pomp and Splendor of this World, wantoning in Luxury, Power, and Wealth? Does TRUTH need the Charms of earthly Grandeur to recommend it, or the Force of civil Power to spread or to establish it? Was it thus the blessed GOSPEL was at first propagated, made its Way, and prevailed over all the Earth? No, worldly Grandeur and Power have generally, you well know, Sir, if not evermore, been extremely injurious to it; have enervated, obstructed, under Pretence of improving, have greatly corrupted and depraved it, and have robbed it of its native Beauty, and Glory, and Strength.

High Dignities and Preferments, Mitres and Thrones, Lordships and large Revenues, have a mighty Force, you will own Sir, to bias and pervert the Mind, in its Searches after TRUTH. These are not the Means which the GOD of TRUTH uses, to draw the Mind to it; but you know they are the Means, which the great ENEMY is wont to use, to seduce the Mind from it. 'Tis therefore, I apprehend, Sir, no Presumption at all in Favour of any Church, that it shines with all the Glory of worldly Honours and Wealth. This the prophetic Scriptures very clearly describe as

° John xviii. 36. ^p Matt. xvi. 24. ^q 1 Cor. i. 26.
^r Rev. xi. 3. ^s Ibid. xii. 14. ^t Ibid. xvii. 4, 5—13—17.

as the State of the *false Church*, whilst the *true Church* of JESUS CHRIST, his genuine and faithful Followers, are to be a *little, despised Flock*: A *Seet every where spoken against*: In the World it is to *have Tribulation*, till the expected *happy Period*, when it shall be *the FATHER's good Pleasure to give them THE KINGDOM*.

Let not then the *low Estate* of our Interest, as to the present World, at all frighten or discourage you, Sir, from casting in your Lot amongst us. *The World passeth away*, and all its Glories and Pomp will soon vanish like a Dream before the descending *Son of God*, whom we stedfastly expect.—And then to be *found faithful*; and to have stuck with *unshaken LOYALTY* to the *ONLY Lawgiver, Lord, and King* of the Church.—To have *denied ourselves* any worldly Honours, Preferments or Profits out of Conscience towards *Him*.—To have been *separated from Mens Company*, cast out and reproach'd, because we would not make a Sacrifice of our Virtue and Integrity to the Applause of *the Many*, or the Favour of *the Great*.—Will yield divine Comfort, and procure *immortal Honours* in the everlasting *Kingdom of God*. Pardon me, Sir, if I am here acting a little out of Character, and seem to invade *your Office*: For I am extremely ambitious of engaging so ingenious a Gentleman amongst us.

These, Sir, are the Prospects with which *Dissenters* support themselves under all their Disadvantages with regard to the present World. They remember *WHOSE Disciples and Followers* they are—*WHO it is* that hath said, *IN VAIN do they worship me, teaching for Doctrine the COMMANDMENTS OF MEN*.—*WHO* hath strictly charg'd them to call *NO MAN upon Earth MASTER*, because *ONE only is their MASTER, even CHRIST*.—And, finally, *WHO it is* that hath promised, *that if any Man shall forsake House, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Children, or Lands,*

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for his Names Sake ; he shall receive an hundred fold ; and shall inherit EVERLASTING LIFE.

I now conclude, Sir, by beseeching you very carefully to remember, that the Controversy betwixt us depends *absolutely* and *entirely* upon the Decision of this *single Point*.—Is there *any* OTHER *Lawgiver* or *King* in the Church of God, to whose *Authority* and *Command*, as to Things of Religion, CHRISTIANS are bound to submit, BESIDES JESUS CHRIST ? Or is there not ?—If there be *no other* Lawgiver, *besides* JESUS CHRIST, *no other* King, *no other* Authority to whose *Decrees* in Point of Doctrine, and to whose *Injunctions* in Point of Worship, CHRISTIANS are obliged, and ought to *submit* : then *the* DISSENTERS, in every impartial Judgment, will be, must be *justified* : then They *act right* : then They ought to be *commended*, and will surely be *rewarded* for adhering loyally and firmly to the ONE *only* KING and LORD of the Church : And for faithfully Opposing the Claims of *any* OTHER *Power* ; and for Refusing Obedience to the Injunctions of *any* OTHER *Lawgiver* ; and the Decisions of *any* OTHER *Judge* ; who hath made *other* Articles of Faith, *other* Terms of Communion, *other* Rites of Worship, BESIDES and ABOVE those which CHRIST himself has made.

For to illustrate the Case.—If any *foreign Prince* shall pretend to make Laws, and prescribe Rules of Action to the People of *these Realms*, and shall exact Obedience to his Injunctions from the Subjects of King GEORGE ; I ask, does not your *Allegiance* to HIM, your ONLY SOVEREIGN, *require* and *oblige* you to make your Protest against any such Laws, and to *refuse* your Obedience to them ? But is not the Church a *Province* in which CHRIST ALONE is King, as much as these Realms are the Dominions ONLY of King GEORGE ? If any *human Potentate* then shall rise up in *the Church*, and shall claim

claim *Authority* and *Dominion* over the Consciences of CHRIST's Subjects; Authority as to *Things of Faith*, to decree what HE hath not decreed; and Dominion as to *Things of Worship*, to appoint Rites and Institutions which HE hath not appointed; I ask you, Sir, does not your *Allegiance* to CHRIST, your ONLY Sovereign, *require* and *oblige* you to enter your Protest against such *usurp'd Authority*, and to refuse your Obedience to it?

This, Sir, I repeat it, because I earnestly intreat your peculiar Attention to it, is the *essential* and *important* Point upon which the Controversy betwixt us entirely turns. If you *can* prove, that there is ANOTHER Lawgiver, ANOTHER Judge, ANOTHER King in the Church, *besides* JESUS CHRIST, to whose Authority we are to submit in Things of Religion; and that the *King* and *Parliament* of these Realms are this *Lawgiver*, and this *Judge*; you will then at once gain your Point; and by that *single Blow* you will entirely overthrow the *dissenting* Interest and Churches. We will immediately become your Converts; and flock into the *Establish'd Church*.

But if you *cannot* prove this Point; you then *yield* the Cause to us; you then, in effect, own us *justified* before the World; and you leave us to indulge the rational and reviving Hope of being acknowledged by our *great* LAWGIVER, at his Return into the World, as his *loyal* and *obedient* Subjects; of being advanced to *peculiar* Honours and Dignities in his Kingdom, as we have here suffer'd on Account of our *Duty* and *Allegiance* to him; and of receiving from *our* JUDGE, before Angels and Men, that Sentence of Applause—*Well done, good and FAITHFUL Servants, enter ye into the Joy of your LORD*.

I have only to add, Sir, that this *Principle*—That CHRIST is the *only* Lawgiver and King in his Church; and that no Man, no Body of Men upon Earth, have any Authority to make Laws,

or to prescribe Things *in Religion*, which shall oblige the Consciences of his Subjects ; is *the grand, the only* Principle, upon which the UNITY, the PURITY, and the PEACE of the *Christian Church* can possibly subsist. Take away *this*, and you let in endless Discords and Corruptions into it : You split it into Parties : You make CHRISTIANITY one Thing, in one Country ; a quite different, in another. In *England* you make it wear an *Episcopal* Form ; In *Scotland*, a *Presbyterian* : In *France*, a *Popish* : In *Denmark*, a *Lutheran* : In *Prussia*, a *Calvinist* : In *Russia*, a *Grecian*, &c.—But ought these Things to be so ? Is CHRIST *divided* ? Is this *the* UNITY of his one beautiful, well-compacted *Body* ? Can these be *all* genuine apostolic CHRISTIANITY ?—Rather, are either of them so ?—When the *Powers of this World* take upon them *authoritatively* to interpret and prescribe in Things of Religion, which are CHRIST's Kingdom and Province, they act beyond their Sphere : They invade the Throne of *another* Prince : The certain Consequence of which is Confusions, Separations ; the *Unity* of the Church is broken, the Rights of *Christians* violated, a Gate open'd for innumerable Superstitions and Inventions to enter, and mingle with the pure Doctrines of CHRIST ; and hence necessarily flow Schisms, Emulations, Contentions, and every evil Work.—

I beseech you, Sir, by the *Mercies of God* ; and for the *Honour of CHRISTIANITY* ; and by the *Alliance* you owe your ONLY *Lawgiver* JESUS CHRIST, to weigh these Things in an impartial and unbiass'd Mind. May his *Spirit of TRUTH* judge betwixt us upon the Point, and teach us his Will ! To his Influence I commend you, Sir, and am,

With great Sincerity,

Your very Humble Servant,

A DISSENTER.

P O S T S C R I P T,

*Containing Remarks on the DEFENCE
of your Three Letters.*

THE above Letter being sent to the Press before your *Defence*, &c. was advertised ; its Publication was staid, till I had seen what Occasion it might give, either to retract or support what was offer'd in my *first Letter*. You seem moved at its pretending to be an Answer to your *three Letters*, when so small a Part of them is consider'd therein : And with Airs quite suitable to the Cause you are pleading, *ecclesiastical Authority*, give me to understand, that your taking any notice of this Performance is to be consider'd as a Condescension to which you were not obliged, and which I had no Right to expect from you. But, pray recollect : What was the avow'd Design and Purport of your Letters ? Was it not to *refute the great and popular Objections of the Dissenters*, and to *bring me over to your Church* ? But upon Reading your Letters, I found you had scarce touch'd upon the *principal Objection* which kept me from your Church. Was it not then my Part to state the Objection to you, and set it in its full Light ? As *unask'd*, you had taken on you to be my Instructor in this Affair ; had I not a Right to lay my Difficulty before you, and to demand your Solution of it ? What, must I *confine* myself to the *Pleas* which you had seen fit to cook up for the Dissenters ; and if I presume to offer *others*, will you magisterially call them *Ramblings*,
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in which you are not obliged to follow? Very pleasant indeed!

Here therefore I now put in my Claim, Sir, and give you to understand, that I expect your plain and full Answer to the *several Objections* against your *establish'd Forms* presented in the above Letter: Some of which, tho' you knew them to be of great Weight with Dissenters, you dextrously avoided bringing into the Debate. To this you are most clearly and indispensibly obliged by *the Province* you have taken on you. If there be any Parts of the *Liturgy* indefensible and absurd, this (1.) condemns *your own CONFORMITY*, who not only declare, but solemnly subscribe your *unfeigned Assent and Consent* to ALL and EVERY THING contained in and prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer*, &c. And, (2.) it justifies *the SEPARATION*, by proving it a severe and cruel Thing to cast out above 2000 of our Ministers from the Church for not declaring and subscribing this *unfeigned Assent and Consent*, &c. which began the *Separation*.

This being premised, we come to the Point of *Church Authority*, upon which the Controversy turns. Here I observe, with pleasure, that you are for mutilating your XXth Article, ridding your Hands of one Part, and holding only to the other. "The Church's Authority in Matters of Faith you have nothing, you say, to do with^a."—But *this*, you know, your Church claims as much as a *Power to make Ceremonies*; and against this Part of its Claim I as much excepted as against the other. When you declare therefore *you have nothing to do with it*, you mean, if I take you right, you will not pretend to undertake its Defence. This to be sure is wise: No Man upon Earth being able to defend it. But then, is it not extremely hard that your Church should still *inflexibly* maintain its Claim to *this Authority*: Should force its *Clergy* to subscribe and acknowledge this

^a Defence, p. 18.

this Claim ; and keep Dissenters from a Share in those Emoluments, “ *after which, you say, they languish,*” partly for refusing their solemn Subscription to so *unreasonable* a Claim ?

“ By the Church’s Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, is meant, a Right in the Pastors and Governors thereof, to ordain and appoint such Things, so as to make it, *ordinarily*, the Duty of the People to conform themselves to them ^b. ” — You have artfully declined to say, *whom* you understand by its *Pastors and Governors* ; but from other Passages ^c it is evident you mean the *Bishops and Clergy* ; for the *Civil Magistrate*, you declare, *has no such Power at all* ^d. Now,

1. That the *Clergy* have no Power nor Authority at all of this kind over the *Laity*, I proved beyond all doubt from the express Command of our great Lawgiver.—*Call no Man upon Earth MASTER ; ONE is YOUR MASTER, even CHRIST, and all ye are Brethren* ^e. *The Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion and Authority over them, but it SHALL NOT BE SO amongst you* ^f. What have you said in Answer to these Texts ? Not a single Word. You leave them to stand in full Force against you : And without one Text of Scripture to support this Authority of the *Clergy* over the *Laity*, you go on to treat it as a Thing indisputable and allow’d : And labour hard in raising a pompous Structure upon the Sand. What you say as to the *Kiss of Charity*, has been consider’d above, p. 29. Should even *this* be allow’d to be a *merely ecclesiastical and prudential Institution*, it will by no means establish the *Authority* you claim for your *Pastors and Governors* ; the Orders, Decrees, and Appointments of those Times being by the *common Consent and Suffrage* of the whole Church ; in which the *Laity* had an equal, if not a far greater, Share of Authority than the *Clergy* ^g. But,

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^b Def. p. 10. ^c Lett. II. p. 14. ^d Def. p. 18. ^e Mat. xxiii. 8, 9. ^f Mat. xx. 25. ^g Vid. Exam. of the *Codex*, p. 120.

2. Your lodging this Power in the *Pastors and Governors* absolutely contradicts *the Articles* themselves. For as the XXth Art. claims it for *the Church*: So the immediately preceding Art. (XIX.) expressly defines what it means by THE CHURCH, viz. *A Congregation of faithful Men where the pure Word of God is preach'd.*—'Tis to the *whole Body* of the Faithful then that this Power of decreeing Ceremonies, if any such there be, belongs: How then do you presume, Sir, to wrest it from them, and to vest it solely in the *Clergy*? And,

3. When you add, *that to this Right of the Pastors to decree Ceremonies, it is the Peoples Duty, ORDINARILY, to conform themselves*: The Word, *ordinarily*, seems thrown in as a Mist to darken the Point; a seasonable *Salvo* to which to retreat when you feel yourself push'd. What mean you, Sir, by *ordinarily*? How shall the People know *when* it is, and *when* it is not, their Duty to submit to these Injunctions of their spiritual Governors? Are the People themselves to judge, *always* to judge, of the Fitness and Expedience of the injoin'd Ceremonies; or are they not? If they are not, then they are *absolutely* to resign themselves to the Direction of their Governors; which is palpable and gross *Popery*, and leads directly to *Rome*. But if they are, then the *Babel* of Church-Authority is at once over-thrown: For then the Authority resides no longer in *the Decrees* of the Governors, but in *the Judgment* of the People. 'Tis the Judgment *they* form of them, which *alone* makes them binding upon them or not. Of *their Number*, whether they are too many; and of *their Nature*, whether they are superstitious, foppish, and vain, you seem sometimes to allow, *the People* are to judge: But if they have a Right *to judge*, they have a Right also *to act* in Consequence of that Judgment; and to withdraw from those Churches where such Ceremonies are injoin'd, as *they think* foppish and vain; and

and to join themselves to others, where *they think* the Worship of God perform'd in a more scriptural and proper Manner. So then, the solemn Parade of *Church-Authority* turns out a mere Shadow. 'Tis an Authority to command, which no one is under Obligation to obey. This Power of *making Ceremonies* must be either limited or unlimited: If it be not *limited* (which you seem to disavow) Pray! *what* is it limits? *What* prescribes its bounds *beyond which it shall not pass*? If the Church has Power to ordain *five* Ceremonies, why not *ten*? And if *ten*, why not more? Who shall pretend to say how far it may go?

Your Illustration "*as to the King's Injunctions,*" &c. ^a will not reach the Case; because the Constitution and Laws of *England* empowers the King to make such Injunctions: But you have not yet proved, and I presume never will prove, that the Constitution of the *Christian Church* empowers its Pastors to *decree* Ceremonies and Rites.

You ask:—"Where does the Church pretend *to be alone the proper Judge*, or where disallow *private Christians* to judge for themselves in these *Matters*?" I will tell you, Sir, in its XXXIVth Article, which decrees, that *whosoever thro' his PRIVATE JUDGMENT, willingly and purposely doth openly break the Traditions and Ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of GOD, and be ordain'd by common Authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like) as he that offendeth against the common Order of the Church, and hurteth the AUTHORITY of the MAGISTRATE.* Private Judgment, you see, is here *forbid* to oppose the *common Order* of the Church, and the *Authority of the Magistrate*; and when it presumes so to do, is to be censured and punished for it.

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^a Def. p. 14.^b P. 13.

“ The Church of *France*, and the Church of
 “ *Rome*, you acknowledge, to be as much possessed
 “ of this Power as the Church of *England*: But it
 “ does not follow that because they have a Power
 “ to decree *Rites*, that they may therefore decree
 “ *Fopperies* and *Superstitions*^k.”—But by what Mark,
 I pray, do you distinguish betwixt *Rites* and *Fop-*
peries; betwixt *Ceremonies* and *Superstitions*? The
 Consecrating of Ground in the *Church of England* is
 a Rite, but the Consecrating of Water in the *Church*
of France is a Foppery.—The Priest’s signing the
 baptised Infant with the Sign of the Cross, in Token
 that it shall confess a crucified Christ, is a signifi-
 cant Rite: But his putting his Finger into its Ear, in
 Token that it shall hear the Word of God; or Salt
 upon its Tongue, in Token that its Speech shall be
 season’d with Salt, are intollerable Fopperies.—The
 Bowings to the Altar, bowing at the Name of *Je-*
sus, Kneeling at the Communion, Sponsors, Sur-
 plice, Hoods, Lawn Sleeves, and every thing of
 this kind used in the Church of *England*, are edify-
 ing and decent Ceremonies, “ of clear Signification
 “ and indisputable Use^l.” But the Slippers and
 Staff, Knocking on the Breast, Elevations, Cros-
 sings, Gesticulations, Sprinklings with holy Water,
 &c. practised in the Church of *Rome*, are ridiculous
 Superstitions.—How happy to have Governors thus
 spiritually gifted; able to distinguish betwixt Things
 that differ!

“ My Suggestion, that by the mere Concessions
 “ of your XXth Article Thousands of Profelytes
 “ have been gain’d from you to the Church of
 “ *Rome*, is rash, you say, and groundless: Nor
 “ do you believe I can name *one* who was ever
 “ gain’d by it^m.”—I will give you two Instances
 almost equal to a thousand. The *first* shall be the
 renowned *Chillingworth*, who was gain’d to the
 Church of *Rome*, chiefly by this Argument, viz.
 The

^k Def. p. 11.^l P. 11.^m P. 15.

*The Necessity of an infallible living Judge of Controversies*ⁿ: Which is but a different Expression for the *Authority of the Church in Matters of Faith*. Now if this Argument was so plausible as to vanquish, and lead captive so great a Master of Reason, Multitudes of weaker Minds have, no doubt, fallen by its Force. The other shall be King *James II*, of whom Bishop *Burnet* says, he gave me this Account of the *Change of his Religion*.— “ All due
 “ Care was taken to form him to a strict Adhe-
 “ rence to the Church: Amongst other Things
 “ much was said of the AUTHORITY of the Church,
 “ and of the Tradition from the Apostles in sup-
 “ port of *Episcopacy*. So when he came to observe
 “ that there was more Reason to submit to the Ca-
 “ tholic Church, than to one particular Church; and
 “ that other Traditions might be taken on her
 “ Word, as well as *Episcopacy* was received amongst
 “ us, he thought the Step was not great, but that
 “ it was very reasonable to go over to the Church
 “ of Rome.” See how dangerous a Weapon is
 this same *Church-Authority*: And how capable of
 being used to the infinite Prejudice of the Pro-
 testant Cause!

“ But granting this Authority of the Church,
 “ (*i. e.* of its Pastors and Governors, its Bishops
 “ and Clergy) How, you ask, would our *Refor-*
 “ *mation* be overthrown by it; which was not car-
 “ ried on in Opposition to Authority, but with the
 “ Concurrence of all the Authority in the Nation?”
 Strange, Sir, you should so soon forget! Did not
 I remember you that the *Reformation* under Queen
Elizabeth, and the present Forms of Worship pre-
 scribed in the Common Prayer, were strongly op-
 posed by every Bishop in the Kingdom; and the
Convocation then sitting, were so far from having
 any hand in it, that they presented to the Parlia-
 ment

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ⁿ Vid. Life of *Chillingworth*, p. 7. ^o *Burnet's Hist. of*
 his own Times, Octav. Edit. Vol. I. p. 194. ^p Def. p. 15.

ment several Propositions in favour of *Popery*, directly contrary to the Proceedings of the Parliament? The *Civil Magistrate*, you affirm, *has no Power at all, nor Authority in these Matters*¹. They are the *Pastors* and *Governors* of the Church, in whom alone it is lodged. But behold, these Pastors and Governors were zealous for the old Religion! They argued, voted, petitioned strenuously for it, and against the *Reformation*. The *Reformation* then, upon your Principles, is built upon a wrong Bottom: Was carried on, not in Concurrence with, but in avow'd Opposition to, *all the Authority of the Nation*. How justly might I here return your own ungenerous Compliment, *It was great Rashness (too great in Conscience) if indeed it was not TREACHERY and PLAYING BOOTY, to set the Protestant Cause upon so sandy a Foundation*². Your Principles, if digested into proper Form, will stand thus.—“ The Church hath Power and Authority “ to decree Ceremonies and Rites: But by *the “ Church*, observe, I understand, not the King and “ Parliament, not the Civil Magistrate, who have “ no Power at all relating to these Matters; but “ the *Bishops* only and *Clergy*, who are appointed “ and called of God to be its *Pastors* and *Governors*: But remember, my Countrymen, the “ Common Prayer, and Forms of Worship now “ established and used amongst you, were introduced into this Church, not by *the Authority*, no, “ nor yet by *the Consent* of the Pastors and Governors whom God had set over it, but in direct “ *Opposition* to them. It was a *Change* brought about “ entirely by the *Civil Magistrate*, who had no Authority to effect it. It was therefore really no “ other than an ecclesiastical Rebellion, an unjustifiable Revolt from the only rightful Rulers and “ Governors of the Church in its spiritual Concerns.”——

This,

¹ Def. p. 18.² P. 19.

This, Sir, I apprehend, is the plain Tendency of your Principles ; though I know you have been so wise as to contradict them again, by allowing, “ *that if Church Governors will not come into such Reformation, as is according to God’s Word, but obstinately persevere in maintaining their sinful Errors and Corruptions, the People may reform themselves* :.”—But this Concession overthrows your whole Scheme of *Church Authority*, makes THE PEOPLE the *supreme* and *ultimate* Judges, as to Points of Faith and Rites of Worship ; brings down the Decrees of the most numerous and most holy Councils, Convocations, and Synods, to stand at the Bar of *every Man’s* private Judgment ; and vests him with *Authority* to receive or reject them, as to *himself* shall seem fit. So powerful is Truth, which will prevail !

But your Positions as to the *Civil Magistrate*, deserve a more distinct and accurate Consideration. “ He has no Power at all to decree Rites in divine Worship ”—This Power is not in the King and Parliament, for in this very Article (XX.) which, together with the rest, is confirmed by Act of Parliament (13 *Eliz.* c. 12.) and thereby made a Part of our ecclesiastical Constitution, they have plainly owned it to be in *the Church* ; and “ no body imagines, that by the Church they meant *themselves*. The King and Parliament then have plainly disowned any such Power in themselves, and have recognized it to be in the Church ”.—This, Sir, is a Doctrine, which may be of dangerous and important Consequence, and I believe not founded in Truth. For,

1. As ’twas the *Queen* and *Parliament* alone, without, yea in Opposition to, the *Bishops* and *Convocation*, which decreed the present Form and Worship of your Church, and to their Authority alone it owes its very Being, Birth, and Support ; by affirming

* Def. p. 13.

† Ibid. p. 18.

“ Ibid. p. 17.

affirming that they had *no Power* nor *Authority of this Nature*, you knock down and demolish the *Church of England* at once, and lay it prostrate in the Dust. And,

2. That the King and Parliament by acknowledging this Power to be in *the Church*, have not *disclaimed* it, nor put it out of their own Hands, is incontestible hence, that they have at the same Time expressly told you, what they mean by *the Church*; not the Bishops and Clergy, but the *Congregation of the Faithful*; of which Congregation *themselves* are not only a Part, but the *principal* and *ruling* Part: And accordingly, our Laws and Constitution have vested the *supream Power* of prescribing Ceremonies and Rites, *only* in them. I ask you—By *what Authority* do the Rubricks of the Common Prayer, bind the Clergy to Obedience; or *whence* is it, they are obliged to observe the Rites and Forms prescribed in that Book? Is it not *entirely* by the Authority and Act of *Parliament*? As for the Pastors and Governors to whom you *appropriate* this Authority, the Bishops and Clergy, they have no Power by our Constitution to make one single Law, to decree one Rite, or to prescribe one Ceremony: When assembled in Convocation, they are absolutely under the Controul and Direction of the Civil Power. “ Even the very Subjects of their En-
“ quiry and Debate, as well as the Extent of their
“ Ordinances in Point of Obligation, are prescribed
“ by *Statute Law*, that they cannot so much as at-
“ tempt any Canons or Constitutions, without a
“ Royal Licence; and that none of their Ordi-
“ nances are binding, even against the private
“ Customs of a single Parish ”. How is it then you affirm, *the King and Parliament to have dis-
owned any such Power in themselves, and to have re-
cognized it to be it in the Church*? But,

3.

* Examinat. of the Codex, p. 114.

3. The Point is if possible, still rendered more clear from the XXXIVth Article above cited; which says *If any Man through his private Judgment, openly breaks the Ceremonies of the Church, ordained by COMMON AUTHORITY, he shall be openly rebuked, as one who offendeth against the common Order of the Church, and burteth the AUTHORITY OF THE MAGISTRATE.*—The *Authority of the Magistrate* then, is indisputably concerned in *ordaining* these Ceremonies: And your Church, Sir, however loath you are to hear it, is undoubtedly a *Parliamentary* and *Civil* Constitution; made, formed, supported entirely by the Civil Magistrate, and by him alone is it capable of being thrown into a new Form.

But you ask, “ Are not the Dissenting Churches “ in the same Sense *Parliamentary*? Do they not “ depend entirely upon an Act of Parliament, the “ Act of Toleration * ?” No; the Dissenting Churches were formed, subsisted, and grew *without* and *before*, any Parliamentary Authority. We are thankful to the excellent and good Government under which we live, for the Act of Toleration. But would humbly beg Leave to say, we derive not our Power to assemble for divine Worship, nor our Ministers theirs to officiate in such Assemblies, from any human Law, but from our *natural Right* as Men, and from the Authority of CHRIST. The Act of Toleration only protects us in the Enjoyment of this Right.

“ But above all Things you marvel, that whilst “ I was making this Push at the Church of *England*, “ I did not reflect how much *I laid myself open*: “ For if there was ever upon Earth a *Church*, “ which could properly be called *Parliamentary*, it “ was the *Presbyterian* in the Time of the *grand* “ *Rebellion*.” What you call the *grand Rebellion*, Sir, a *British House of Commons*, since the Restoration,

* Def. p. 21.

† Ibid. p. 20.

storation, call a *Vindication of their* JUST LIBERTIES; and brought one of their Members, *Lenthall*, upon his Knees at the Bar, and there sharply reprimanded him, for presuming to reflect upon it in the Manner you have done². Besides, if it was a *grand Rebellion*, the Shame and Reproach of it falls chiefly upon the *Church of England*; the *Parliament* who began it, consisting almost entirely of Members of that Communion, as Lord *Clarendon* himself owns. But, what if the *Presbyterial* Church established afterward by them was truly *Parliamentary*, how have *I laid myself open*! Had I said or suggested any Thing at all relating to *that Church*, or the Proceedings of *those Times*? Not a single Word; but for aught I had said, it appears not but I as much condemn that *Establishment* as yourself. How then have *I laid myself open*! Are you, Sir, the Gentleman, that reproves me for *Ramblings*?

You put the Case³, “ that any of our Dissenting Churches, or the Church of *Scotland*, should
 “ by an Act of the general Assembly ordain, that
 “ a decent Basin, with clean Water should be provided, and placed near the Pulpit, that so the
 “ Minister taking the Child in his Arms, may
 “ conveniently pour or sprinkle Water upon its
 “ Face, in the Name of the Father, &c. Here are
 “ several Rites ordained, which Christ in his Wisdom did not think proper to ordain, and one of
 “ them at least as exceptionable as any excepted
 “ against in our Church, *Sprinkling*—What will
 “ this Gentleman say to such an Appointment?”
 I will say, Sir, that if Compliance with this Injunction be made a *necessary Term* of receiving Baptism in that Church (as the *Cross* and *Sponsors* are made necessary in yours) so as that no Child shall be baptized, that is not *sprinkled* from such Basin; and the Parent that desires to have his Child dipped (believing

² Journal of the 12th of May 1660.

³ Def. p. 23, 24.

(believing *that* to be the only Way in which Christian Baptism ought to be administered) shall not have it done; in that Case, Sir, I will say the Church acts a tyrannical, unjust, schismatical Part; and if I could have my Child baptized in any other Church, constituted upon a more *Catholic* and *Scriptural* Plan, I should think it my Duty to apply to it on that Occasion. The Spirit of Ceremony-making and Church Tyranny, is of a restless and incroaching Nature, and ought *timely* to be crushed. 'Twas from such *little Beginnings*, the Mass of *Romish* Fopperies grew up to its present Heighth.

“ The *natural Rights* you represent some of our Fellow-subjects as submitting to be deprived of “ by disqualifying Laws, without going about to “ *turn the World upside down for their Repeal*,” are vastly too *trivial*, to be compared with those of which Dissenters are deprived; nor are they disqualified as to these, upon the Account of *Conscience* and *Religion* (the hard Case of Dissenters) for acting as we think the Authority and Laws of God indispensibly oblige us: Nor finally, can the Persons you mention, perhaps be properly said to have a *natural Right*, to sustain at the same Time two different Characters, and to execute two Offices which are generally inconsistent and interfere with each other—So the Cases are not parallel. Besides, why Sir, are we represented as *turning the World upside down*? Have we ever kindled Tumults, raised Mobs, demolished Houses, threatned Courts—under a seditious Cry, that our *Churches were in Danger*? We appeal to the impartial World, for the Loyalty and Peaceableness with which we behave.

You pass over, by your own Confession, *almost half my Pamphlet* ^c unremarked; in which the Constitution of the Church of *England* is compared

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with

^b Def. p. 6, 7.

^c Ibid. p. 37.

with that of the Church of CHRIST, and they are shewn to be *Societies* of a quite different Nature ; so as that a Person's Separation from the one, does by no Means imply his Separation from the other. Your replying nothing to this, you will give me Leave to impute to some other Cause, than "*your not observing any Thing in it, which pretends to refute or contradict any Position advanced in your Letter.*" Is not the Charge of *Schism* your favourite and constant Topic ? But if I prove the *two Societies* so entirely different in their Constitution and Frame, as that my not communicating in the former, does in no wise break me off from, nor in the least interrupt my Communion in the latter, is not this a *Refutation* of one of the chief and most interesting Parts of *your Letters* ? And did not Justice to your Argument demand, if you could have given it, a proper Reply ?

" 'Tis growing mighty modish, you complain, with our People to laugh at all Notions of Church Communion, and to make nothing of the most unnecessary Separations ^d." Yes, I thank God, the loud Peals you were wont to ring us upon the Head of *Schism*, are generally treated with pretty much Neglect, not only amongst our People, but even amongst your own. For when one sees grave Gentlemen setting themselves up for *Rulers* and *Governors* in the Name of the Lord, claiming Power to forgive Sins, to decree Ceremonies, to make Laws, and to determine Points of Faith ; and then thundering out their Anathemas, upon such as refuse to submit to their Authority.—What must this provoke in all sensible Spectators, but a Mixture of Contempt, Indignation, and Mirth ?

Can these *spiritual Fathers* in their Consciences, believe *our SCHISM* to be so horrid and so damning,
and

and yet refuse to drop the Ceremonies which they see to be the *Stone of Stumbling*, at which we so grievously and wickedly fall? What, for the Sake of a few Things which they own to be *indifferent*, will they harden themselves against the Cries of so many perishing misguided *Christians*, and *destroy the Souls for which Christ died*! Forgive me, Sir, if I cannot think it; but that *Schism* is only used as an *ecclesiastical Scarecrow*, to keep the Simple in Awe, and to establish a sacerdotal Empire over ductile and weak Minds.

“ All Christians, you affirm, living within the
 “ Church of *England*, which is co-extended with
 “ the Kingdom, may be truly said to owe it Obe-
 “ dience and Submission, and are *de Jure*, whe-
 “ ther they will be or not *de Facto*, true Members
 “ and Subjects of it.” But pray tell me: Is not
 the *Church of Scotland* equally co-extended with
that Kingdom, as the *Church of England* is with
this? And do not all who live within its Pale, owe
 it like Submission? Is not the *Presbyterian* Disci-
 pline and Worship as much established there, as
 the *Episcopal* is here? If it be *Schism* then, and a
 grievous Sin for Dissenters to withdraw from the
 established Church in *South-Britain*, is it not *alike*
 schismatical and wicked in your *Episcopal* Bre-
 thren to withdraw from the *Presbyterian* Church
 established in *the North*? Whence is it we never
 hear from you any solemn Admonitions to your
 Brethren beyond the *Tweed*, of the detestable Sin
 of *Schism*; warning them of its damning Nature,
 and exhorting them speedily to unite with the estab-
 lished Church! Here your grave Lectures may
 possibly have good Effect; and if you really
 thought *Schism* so grievous an Offence as you affect
 to represent, 'tis strange you never try the Power
 of your Persuasions with your Brethren in the
 M 2 *North.*

North. This would be a noble Proof that you were in earnest, and sincere. But whilst, amidst your warmest Harangues against the *English* Separation, you encourage and support the Dissent from the *Scotish* Church; what can be thought of your Outcries about Schism, but that they deserve a Name more severe than I am willing here to give?

Your Notion of our being “*true Members* of the “*Church of England de Jure*, tho’ we are not, and “*will not be de Facto*”—is to me quite new, and surpasses my Comprehension. I thought it enter’d essentially into the Idea of a *Church*, that it is a *Society of VOLUNTEERS*: A Company join’d together in certain Acts and Professions by *common CONSENT*: And that *without*, much less *against*, his own Agreement and Consent, no Man could with any Truth be stiled a Member of any Church. All Persons living in Christendom may be said to owe *Jesus Christ* Obedience and Submission, with infinitely greater Reason than all the People of *England* can be said to owe it to the Church; but does it therefore follow, that they are all *de Jure*, if they will not be *de Facto*, *TRUE Members* of the Church of *Christ*? What, those who openly renounce *Christ*, declare him to be an Impostor, and utterly disavow Obedience and Subjection to him, can *such*, with any Truth or Propriety, be stiled *true Members* of his Church! Strange Divinity indeed! *Christ’s Church* then, instead of a *Congregation of faithful Persons*, may now be defined a Society of impious Blasphemers, of Infidels and profane Persons, who neither fear God, nor believe in *Jesus Christ*; these all may be declared and treated as *true Members* of his Church. If this indeed be right, then with some Pretence it may be said, that those who openly renounce and disclaim the Church of *England*, and declare they will
not

not live in any Subjection to it, may yet be consider'd as *true* Members of it.

I owe Allegiance to the *King of England*, because I receive Protection from him, and enjoy innumerable *civil* Blessings by means of his Government, under which I *consent* to live. But it does not hence follow, that I owe Subjection to the *Church of England*, (as you argue, pag. 29.) from whom I receive no Protection, enjoy no Benefit nor Advantage, and in Communion with which I by no means *consent* to live. CONSENT, Sir, is indispensibly and essentially necessary to form the Relation betwixt Pastors and People: And without this *Consent* no Church in any Christian or scriptural Sense can possibly be formed. *Dissenters* therefore can with no Justness nor Propriety in the World be stiled *true Members* of your Church. Your solemn Excommunications of them is really a Casting such out, as never were in it: So the Miracle still remains.

As to our *Posture* of receiving the Lord's Supper, instead of ingenuously owning your great *Misrepresentation*, you seek by frivolous and quaint Questions to raise a Dust to conceal it. As, " what " meaneth this *Informant*, by *some* of their Churches, " which have admitted kneeling? What by *some* " in their Churches? If there were any considerable Number, &c. '." Their *Number*, give me leave to tell you, Sir, is nothing to the Purpose. 'Tis the LIBERTY they have to do it, is the only Point in Debate. If *all* have this *Liberty*, tho' not one in five thousand should actually use it; my Point stands firm, yours is overthrown; and you stand convicted before the World of having given a very wrong and injurious Account of us. You rashly asserted that *Kneeling* among us was NEVER *allowed to be departed from; that our Ministers*

nisters INSISTED upon, and REFUSED to abate it. — This, from my own certain Knowledge, from the Information of others, from *Baxter's* reform'd Liturgy, I proved to be a false Representation. In the second Edition of my Letter, (pag. 21.) I added a Passage from *Dr. Calamy's brief Account to the German Divines*, which expressly says, — *The Communicants amongst PROTESTANT DISSENTERS are AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE in the Time of Receiving; tho' a Table-Posture is most commonly used. Note.* To this *brief Account*, &c. you appear to have been no Stranger; you had, doubtless, read it; for you quote a long Passage from it (Lett. II. pag. 62.) not *four Lines* distant from that I have now cited. How then could you take upon you so roundly to affirm — *that it is NEVER ALLOWED to be departed from*, &c. When you had seen it declared to the World that our *Communicants were AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE* !

But if this deserves an ingenuous Blush, I am called upon to blush with you, “ For having said “ that Christ and his Apostles, without all peradventure, *sat around the Table*, when every Body “ knows, who knows any Thing at all, that they “ used the recumbent Posture, which is no more “ Sitting than it is Kneeling^s. ” — If my Assertion cannot be supported by indisputable Authority, I have a Blush at your Command, Sir. Let my Vouchers be heard. *St. Matthew*^h says, *he SAT DOWN with the twelve. — And as they were eating JESUS took Bread and blessed it. St. Mark*ⁱ, *As they SAT and did eat, JESUS took Bread, &c. St. Luke*^k, *When the Hour was come, he SAT DOWN, and the twelve Apostles with him: And he took the Bread and gave Thanks.* If I am now to be corrected for representing Christ and his Apostles as

SITTING

^s Def. p. 31.

^h xxvi. 20.

ⁱ xiv. 18,

^k xxii. 14.

SITTING *around the Table*, the Weight of the Stroke will fall entirely upon *the Scriptures*; under which Patronage I am safe. I make no manner of doubt, Sir, but the Posture was *sitting*, though with the Body, perhaps, a little *leaning* or *reclin'd*. Nor would our Language afford our Translators any better, or indeed any other, Word than *sitting*, to express it by. Pray, how would you render it—*As they RECUMB'D and did eat.*—*And when the Hour was come, he RECUMB'D with his twelve Apostles?* If every Body, “*who knows any Thing at all, knows they used the recumbent Posture,*” then good Mr. Henry knew nothing at all; for, he says, “He sat down in the usual Table-Gesture; not lying on one side, for it was not *easy* to eat, nor *possible* to drink in that Posture, but sitting upright, tho’ perhaps, sitting low:” Or rather, as Dr. *Lightfoot* tells us, the Posture was, sitting on a Couch, leaning the left Elbow on the Table.

My Account of the Constitution of the Church of *England*, of the regal Supremacy, and of the Proceedings of the Convocation in the Affair of Mr. *Whiston*, you call *Misrepresentations*¹; but I observe you are so *prudent* as not to offer a single Word in Proof of their being such.

Your representing me as having a *great Zeal for Arianism*, and *being fond of these new Notions*^m, for which I had given not the least real Occasion, is an Artifice so low, that you must give we leave to look down with great Pity upon it; not doubting but I have an Advocate and an Avenger in your Breast.

There is something truly extraordinary in your affirming—“That the *damnatary Clauses* of the “*Athanasian Creed* may be as safely subscribed, “without any explanatory Declaration, as the *holy* “*Scriptures*;

¹ Def. p. 37, 38.

^m P. 38, 44.

“ *Scriptures*; at least such Passages, as *He that believeth not shall be damned—He that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him*”, &c.”—As much as to say, You may as confidently assent to the Decisions of a weak and fallible *Man*, concerning the *everlasting State* of Multitudes of his Fellow Men, as to the Decision of the omniscient and infallible GOD.—Or thus, because GOD hath fixed *some* Terms for a Man’s Entrance into Life, therefore *Man* may take upon him to devise and fix *others*.—Or thus, because CHRIST had Authority to pronounce, that no Man who received not *the Gospel*, which he preached, should finally be saved, therefore *Athanasius* (if he was its Compiler) had Authority to pronounce, that no Man who believed not *the Creed* which he had made, should attain eternal Life, but should *everlastingly perish*.—Are these Conclusions just?

I cannot think myself to need your Forgiveness, Sir, for asking, “ whether you were amongst the “ weak and uncharitable Minds, who damn to the “ Pit of Hell, all who cannot receive all the dark “ and mysterious Points set forth in the *Athanasian Creed*.”—For does not that Creed most *peremptorily* pronounce this Damnation on all such? Are not you a zealous Advocate and Admirer of that Creed? Do you not *yourself* thirteen Times a Year, in the Presence and Church of GOD, and as his Minister and Ambassador, declare solemnly to the People, *That whoever does not keep WHOLE and UNDEFILED the Faith therein delivered, be shall WITHOUT DOUBT perish everlastingly*? Where then is the wrong of my asking, *Whether you are amongst the uncharitable Persons?* &c. For if you are *sincere* in its Use, and do really believe what you solemnly tell the People, when you read to them *that*

that Creed, I cannot see but you must be content to be reckoned in that Number. For how to reconcile a solemn Declaration concerning certain Persons, that WITHOUT DOUBT *they perish everlastingly*, with Hopes of their Salvation, is to me quite incomprehensible.

The Subscriptions of our Ministers, with the Protestation they made against the *damnatory Clauses*, can with no Truth, I apprehend, be called “a *Protestatio contra Factum*, nor a subscribing Assent “ to the Truth of certain Propositions, at the same “ Time declaring they do not assent to it.” For it really amounted to no more than this—“ I believe “ the Articles of this Creed, and think it agree- “ able to the Word of God, but I here publickly “ declare, I do not consider the *damnatory Clauses* “ as any Part of the Creed, nor give my Assent “ to them.” As for the Subscription of our present Ministers, if it be not done under a Claim of the Benefit of this Protestation made by their Predecessors, or with some such Protestation made by themselves; I freely own, Sir, I cannot justify it, and think it a Thing which ought not to be done.

SUBSCRIPTION to human Creeds have, I apprehend, been of infinite Disservice and Hurt to the Christian Church, have rent it into a Variety of Sects and angry Parties, and filled it with innumerable Strifes and Debates: They are a *Fence* raised around the Church, which can possibly keep none but *virtuous* and *honest* Persons, but never can one *Hypocrite*, one *Heretick*, or *wicked Man*, from entering into it. I wish the Case you mention may not be extremely common, *viz. Fraudulent and insincere Subscriptions, and the constant Use of Forms, which they who use them do not approve of, whereby the Conscience is defiled* ^p.

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But

But the Point of Subscriptions which is the Subject of your *Appendix*, will be considered by an *abler Hand*; who will give you, I hope, ample Satisfaction on this Head: To his Instructions I commend you, Sir, wishing you with great Sincerity, abundant Peace and Truth.

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